

EDGE PRESENTS

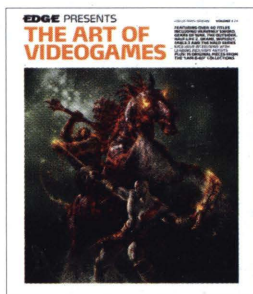
THE ART OF VIDEOGAMES

COLLECTOR'S EDITION VOLUME 1 £8

FEATURING OVER 40 TITLES
INCLUDING HEAVENLY SWORD,
GEARS OF WAR, THE OUTSIDER,
HALF-LIFE 2, OKAMI, WIPEOUT,
FABLE 2 AND THE HALO SERIES
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH
LEADING INDUSTRY ARTISTS
PLUS: 15 ORIGINAL PIECES FROM
THE 'I AM 8-BIT' COLLECTIONS







When we first approached developers and publishers with the idea of putting together an **Edge** special edition dedicated to videogame art, the initial reaction was routinely: "Sounds interesting. So what is it that you actually *want*?" And the answer was: anything. We wanted to assemble 260 pages of sketches, 3D models, target renders, paintings, screenshots – even napkin doodles if the doodles were sufficiently captivating.

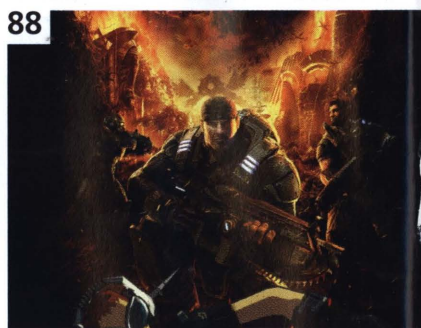
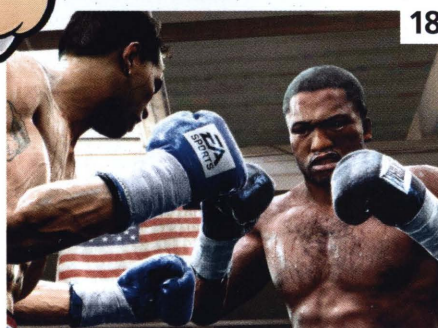
In the end, we didn't receive anything scribbled in a restaurant, but **The Art Of Videogames** is stuffed with materials that don't often enjoy proper airings from the pages of magazines. From the neon-fizzling, digitally concocted lines of *Rez*'s promotional art (p8) to the Rockwell-inspired images that softly map out the shape of *Team Fortress 2*'s environments (p106), there's a diversity here that can sometimes be forgotten when you're plodding your way through your 16th concrete bunker on a grey Sunday afternoon while, via the wonders of internet communication, some cretin informs you that you suck. (Not that we've banned concrete bunkers from these pages – but they at least have to be *interesting* concrete bunkers.)

Pay attention to the interviews accompanying this diversity, however, and you'll begin to see patterns emerge. Making videogames is a craft that is only becoming more sophisticated, and many studios are beginning to apply techniques to their projects' visual make-up to successfully emulate those seen in some of the better productions to come out of Hollywood. But there are simpler considerations, too: use of colour, uniformity of environment, the strength of silhouette.

Fortunately, it isn't too dangerous for games to be informed by the world of film in a visual sense. If we ever get around to assembling **The Writing Of Videogames** (its 260 pages containing, presumably, excerpts from the *Metal Gear Solid* series' most memorable Codec moments),

perhaps we'll have to take a slightly different line. 





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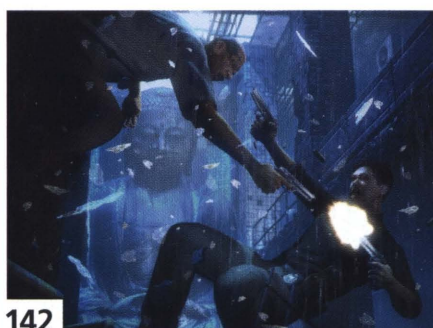
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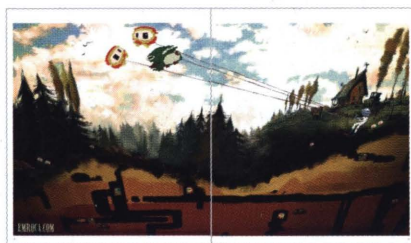
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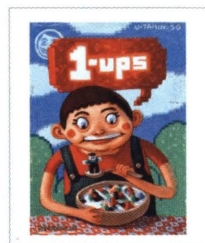


American videogame journalist/author Jon M Gibson launched i am 8-bit in 2005. Born of an unconditional lust for anything pixelly and old-school, the firstperson nature of the title says it all – a proclamation to reassure the world that the majesty of '80s gaming shall never die. At its core, i am 8-bit is an annual group art show, enlisting over 100 artists to put their retro gaming notions to paint, sculpture, ink, thread, or whatever else they see fit. Yet crowds of thousands and fanatical emails have led the artistic conceits of i am 8-bit further, materialising in the form of an official collection from Chronicle Books, a line of 'limited-edition' artist-created T-shirts, and decorative wall decals from Blik. The future might just hold even more interactive collaborations, too, as well as another book in 2008. In the meantime, you can enjoy some of its finest works within these pages. iam8bit.com



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Balloon Sale
■ by Jose Emroca Flores
emroca.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.007



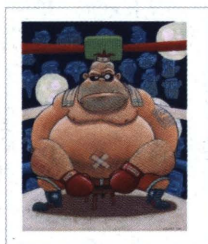
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1-Ups
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justindegarmo.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.006



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8-Bit: One
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trentwatanabe.net
■ from i am 8-bit 2.005



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All Hail King Hippo
■ by Dan Santat
dantat.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.006



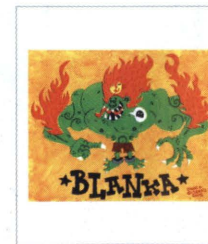
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Beginning the New Adventure
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spaceegg77.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.006



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siskart.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.005



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■ by Jorge R. Gutierrez
super-macho.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.005



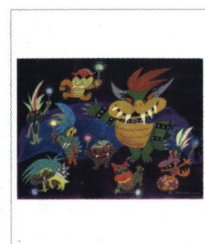
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Dig Dug
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lukechueh.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.005



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■ from i am 8-bit 2.005



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thegirlsproductions.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.006



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The Dynamic Trinity
■ by Matt Burlingame
mattburlingame.com
■ from i am 8-bit 2.006

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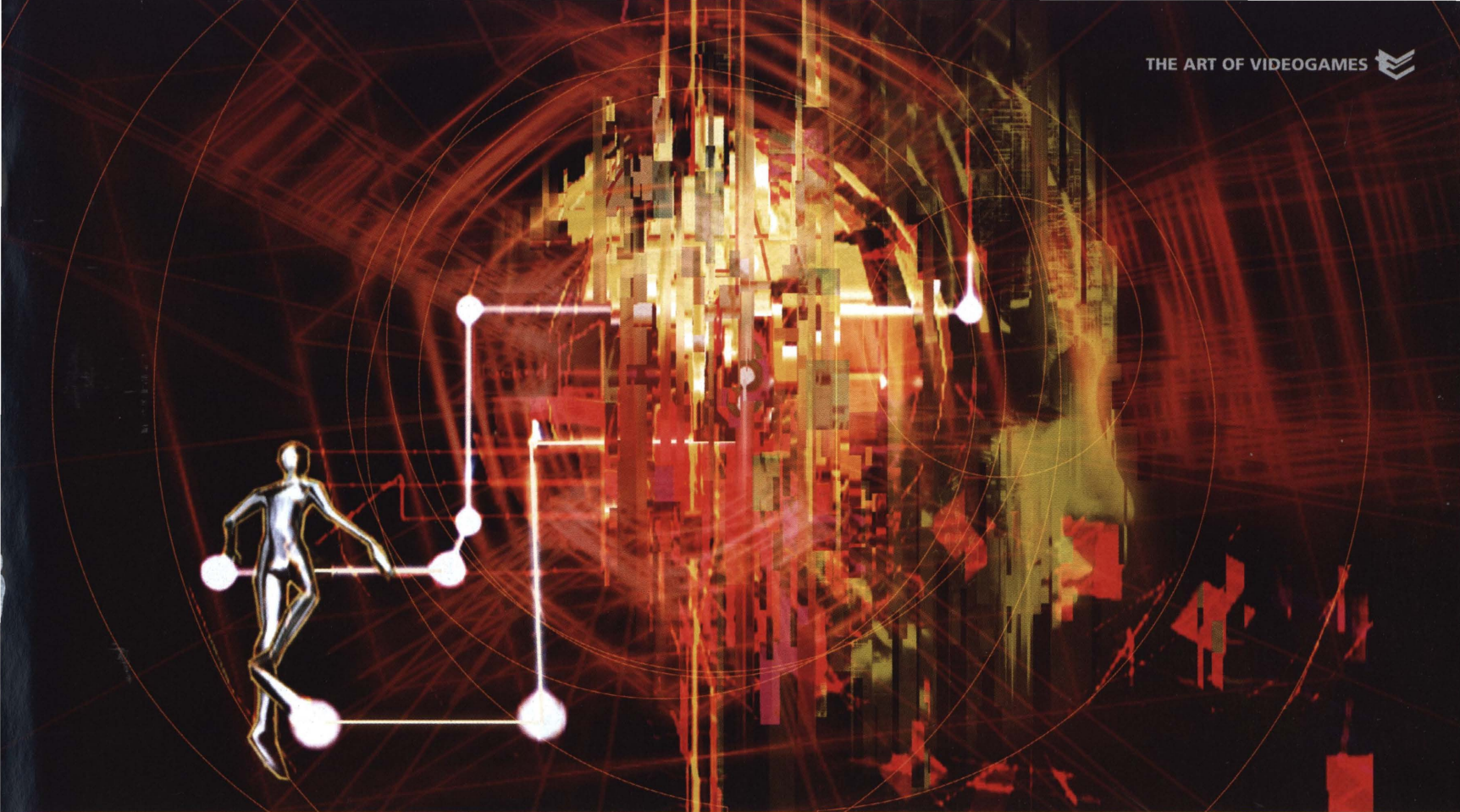
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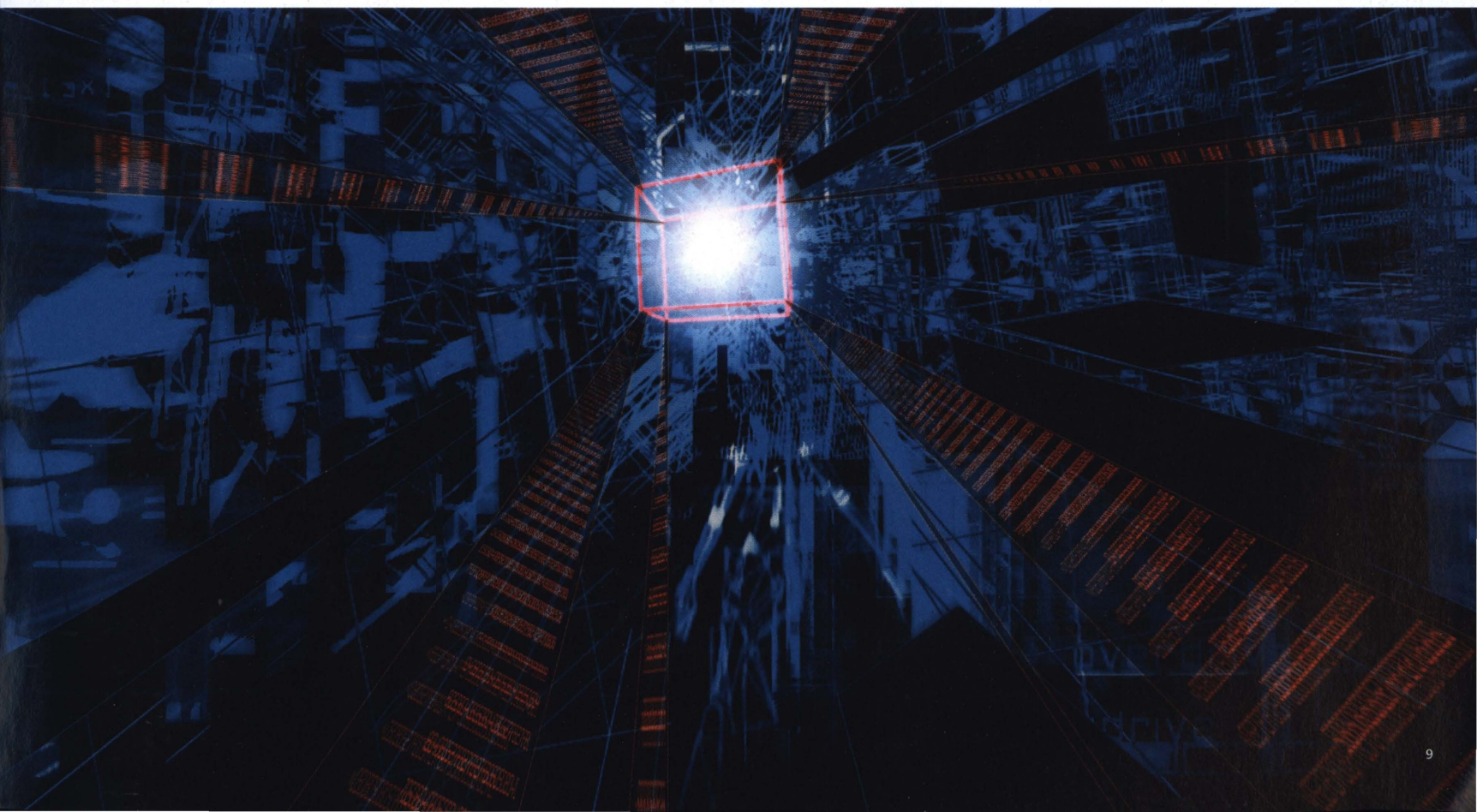
"The main inspiration was the work of Wassily Kandinsky, one of the most famous 20th century artists who was among the first to paint really abstract works. I believe he coined the term 'Synesthesia', which is the culmination of all senses simultaneously. As he painted he could hear tones and chords, and believed every sound and colour were connected somehow through pure vibration. This was the inspiration for the project, which in fact was called K-Project ('K-pro' internally), standing for Kandinsky Project."

8



PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (UNITED GAME ARTISTS) RELEASE: 2002 FORMAT: DC, PS2

REZ





Nothing to something

"Basically, Mizuguchi-san and the rest of the team settled on the concept of 'nothing to something'. We wanted it to be abstract, timeless, and constantly growing. We made many different prototypes, some of which are viewable in various forms on the net. These prototypes were vastly different but always had this same theme at its core. We wanted the whole world to react to the player's movements, and actions, and feedback to come back to the player through every possible avenue, which included sound feedback from the action,

vibration feedback from the controller and Trance Vibrator, and lastly the colourful explosions that followed destroying enemies. These core elements were present in almost every prototype. For the final version of the game we were very attracted to old-school wireframe graphics, and when I first saw the Winamp mp3 video feedback where the shapes and lines are affected in real time by the music, I showed it to Mizuguchi-san immediately. We knew we were on to something."

Jake Kazdal

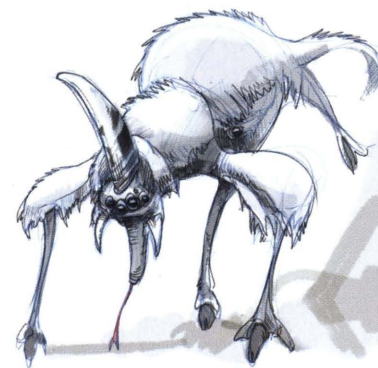


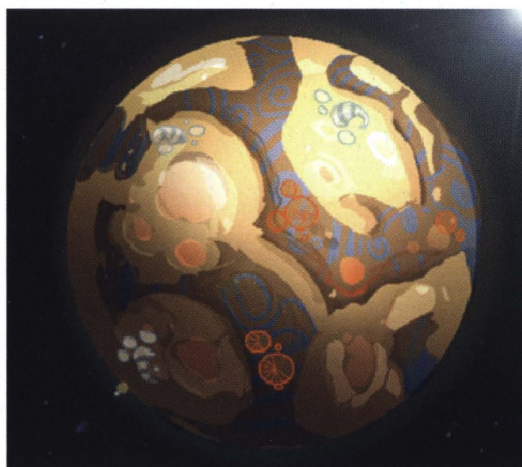
Space Channel 5 and beyond

"Actually, myself and Mizuguchi-san were the only two members to participate fully in both projects. I initially moved to Tokyo to join the K-pro team but the discovery phase took much longer than expected so I became a member of the *Space Channel 5* team for almost a year during production. Once that shipped I moved upstairs and joined the tiny team that would eventually create *Rez*. All the rest of my teammates stayed on for *Space Channel 5 Part Two*. Although I was very

proud of the work I had done on *SC5*, I was thrilled to be on the K-pro team; I loved clubbing with Mizuguchi and listened to much of the same music – it was a real adventure bringing that game to life, definitely one of the best experiences of my life. It was very abstract and unclear exactly what we hoped to achieve, but absolutely thrilling. To this day it is unquestionably the game I am most proud of."

Jake Kazdal





PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: MAXIS RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PC

SPORE

Inspiration

"With the environments, we wanted to get the quality of light that's in a Turner painting. When we zoom out we wanted the planet to be fully in front of you; we wanted it to look like a cross between a Nasa planet and a toy. We looked at Nasa photography and exaggerated the scale.

For the creatures, I looked at a topiary of a dinosaur in a museum. The body was made out of box wood; some parts, like noses or muzzles, were cast from bronze and wired into the topiary. For the parts in the game, artists built them in Maya as traditional meshes.

Textures came from going to the aquarium, from tropical fish and their graphically clean and colourful surfaces. Also, from looking at classic anime, in which backgrounds are realistic and characters are more stylised and cartoonish, which makes the characters pop out.

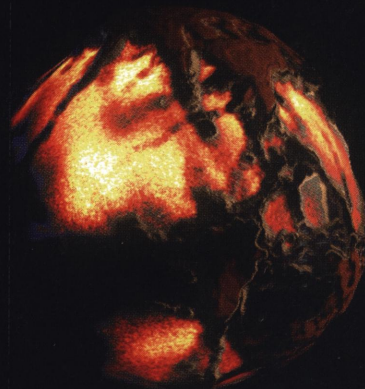
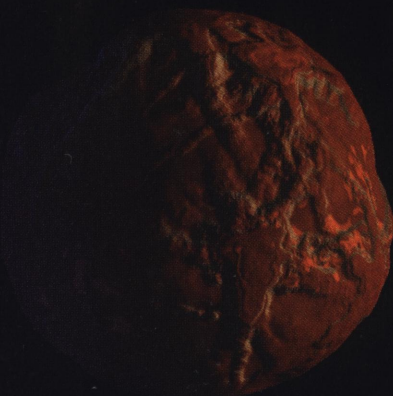
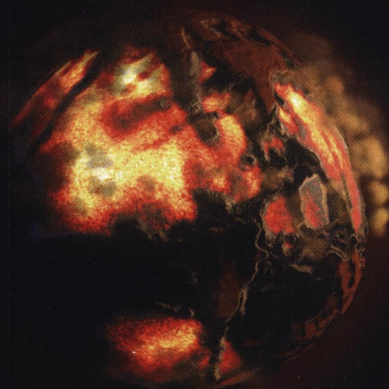
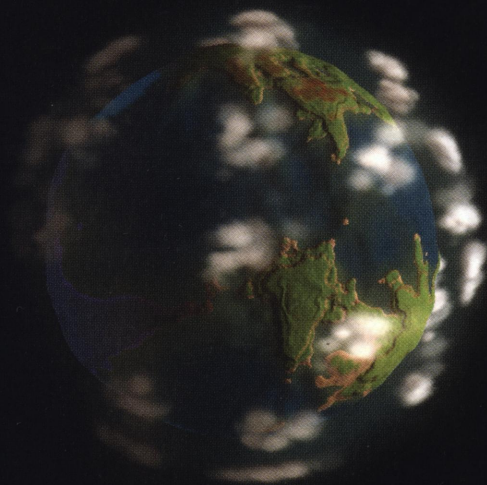
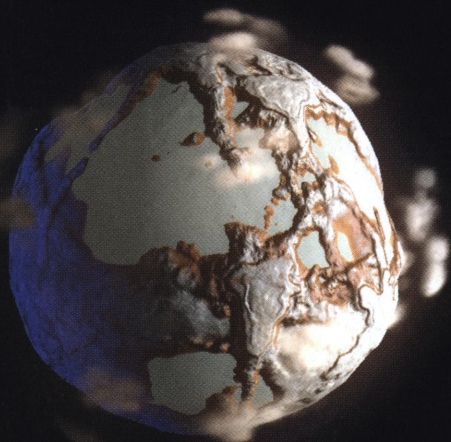
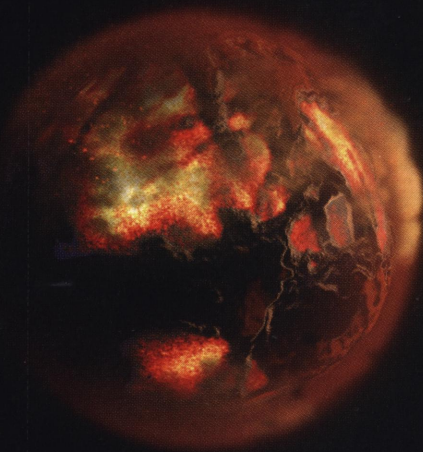
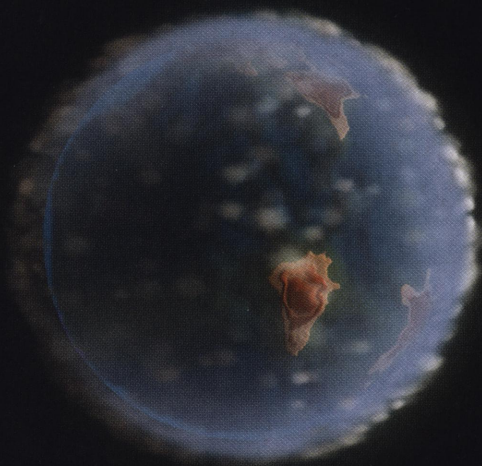
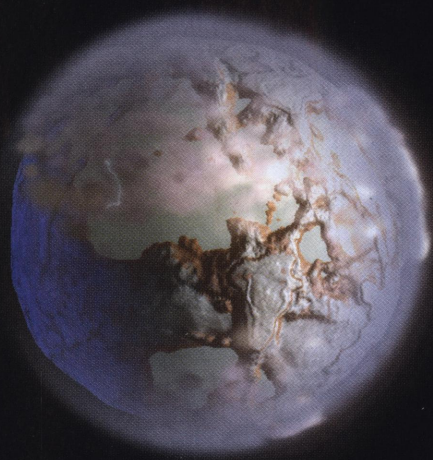
With space, we used Hubble telescope photographs of nebulas and planets. For the galaxy we wanted it to be realistic but toyish – a gigantic, clear architecture of space that we wanted to look playful and abstract.

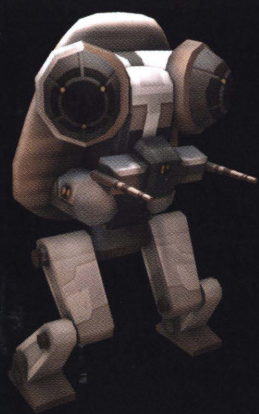
For vehicles and buildings, we read through old science-fiction magazines from the '30s and '40s (Wonder Stories, Amazing Stories, Science Wonder Stories, Everyday Science and Mechanics) and blended our ideas from modern-day science fiction: Star Wars, Star Trek, 2001, etc.

Finally, for the levels, we got ideas from Nasa photos and stereoscopes from Mars, with giant signature things in each level."

Ocean Quigley, art director







Art and technology

"[An example of new technology applied to art is] a procedural painting system in *Spore's* creature editor, which allows players' textures to look professionally made. The system needs to be able to identify with different planets – and there are millions of planets in the game – and a giant level-of-detail system.

A giant level-of-detail system and going through huge-scale changes was a big challenge for this game. We wanted the scope to go from seeing one definite planet to a scope with millions of planets and stars. And with a flawless transition – going from an intimate scale to a vast scale without pauses was a challenge.

When you're making a creature you have to dynamically do all the things that traditional character artists can do – for example, generating UV charts that rig the creature for that particular skeleton – on the fly!

With our vehicle system we had to make these magic 'Legos' where the player can drag something into their work space and grab/handle it to transform it into their own, to stretch and transform in various different ways that lets them manipulate their creations in a tactile way. We came up with a texture system that allows for a seamless operation where everything can unify." *Ocean Quigley*



The 'rules' of the Spore universe

"[The 'rules' are] realistic and internally self-consistent. Planets are real planets with North and South Poles, then turn into stylised/abstract objects, becoming toy-like, punchier versions.

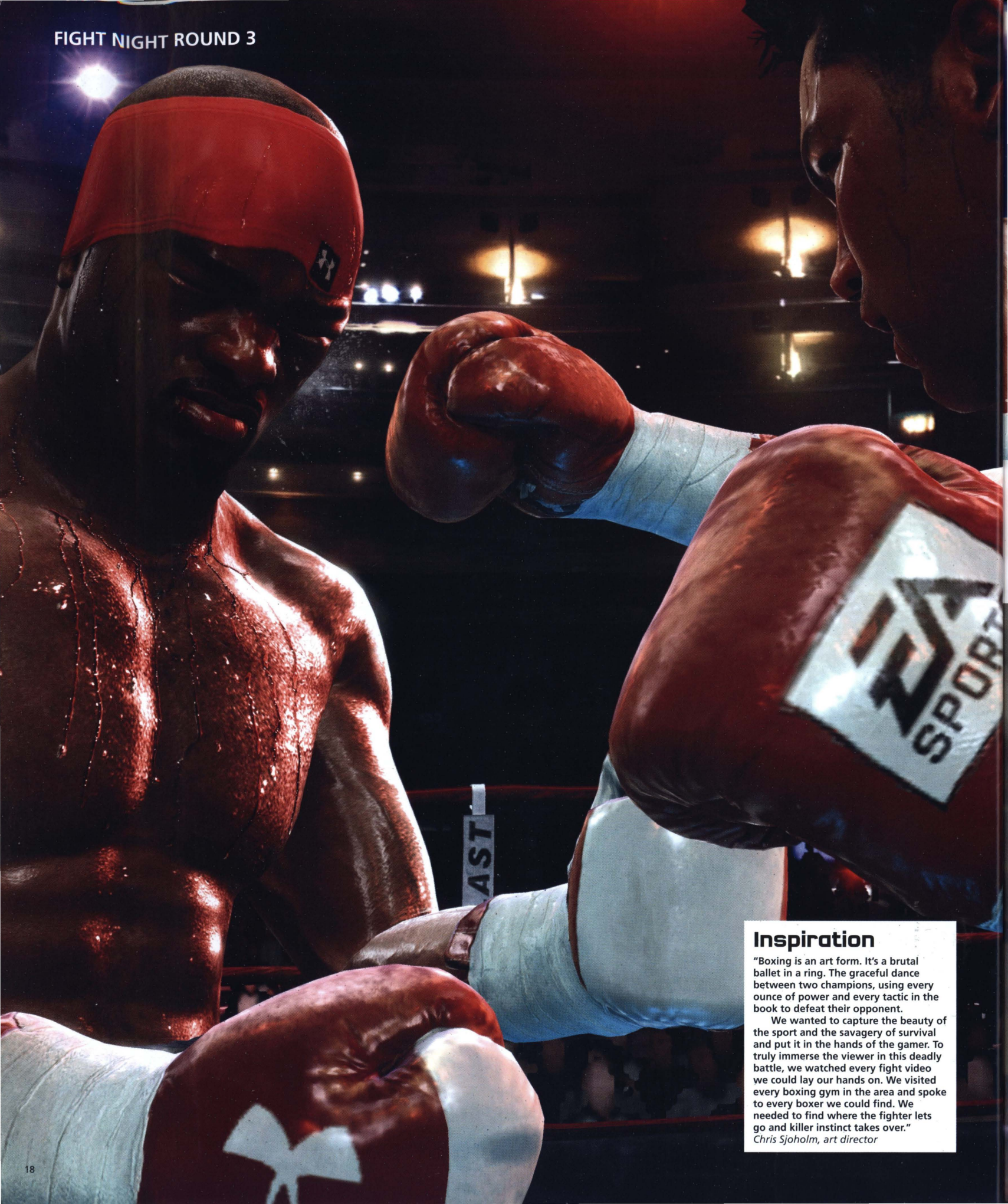
Our artists are making the style guide that allows players to make something look professional. We wanted to find a way to make layer after layer and keep everything looking like it is the way we created it. We wanted to give the players a library of colours and textures to make their own creatures.

Objects that are too realistic will not work within the *Spore* universe; a car from *Grand Theft Auto* wouldn't work – it's too graphical.

Assuming you maintain the same treatment on everything – colours are within the same saturation range, the level of detail is constant, and the aesthetic is maintained (edges are all slightly rounded, say) – everything will work in harmony."

Ocean Quigley





Inspiration

"Boxing is an art form. It's a brutal ballet in a ring. The graceful dance between two champions, using every ounce of power and every tactic in the book to defeat their opponent."

We wanted to capture the beauty of the sport and the savagery of survival and put it in the hands of the gamer. To truly immerse the viewer in this deadly battle, we watched every fight video we could lay our hands on. We visited every boxing gym in the area and spoke to every boxer we could find. We needed to find where the fighter lets go and killer instinct takes over."

Chris Sjöholm, art director



PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (EA CHICAGO) RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: 360, PS3

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3



Researching realism

"It's a double-edged blade. The closer to realism one strives for, the harder those last few per cent gains are to achieve.

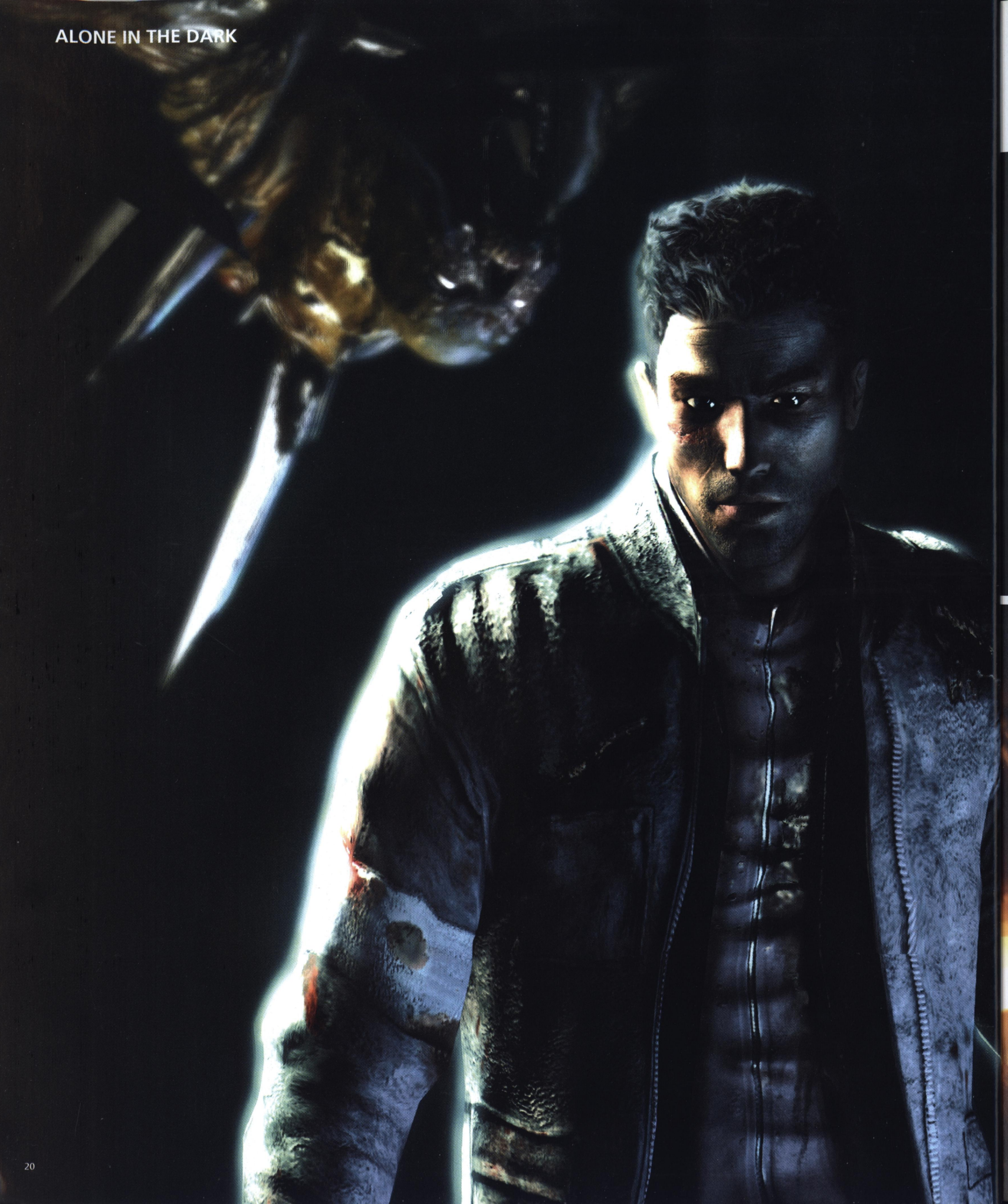
It was obviously imperative to study the human form and the intricacies of the underlying muscles, but to study skin, the reflections of the eyes and how blood flows down a sweaty body were just all some of the many details required in the pursuit of perfection.

Realism lies in the multitude of imperfections and irregularities that exist in nature.

We are always bound by what technology can simulate in real time. With faster machines, more elaborate algorithms and better resolutions, we can dig that much deeper towards the chaos of reality."

Chris Sjöholm

ALONE IN THE DARK



PUBLISHER: ATARI DEVELOPER: EDEN GAMES RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PS3, PC

ALONE IN THE DARK



Inspiration

"Central Park, New York is such a charismatic and globally famous place that we wanted to make it as realistic as possible. So we took our cameras there for a few days and took thousands of shots, from the leaves of the trees to the special bricks of Belvedere Castle. While we were taking photographs in the restrooms of Bethesda Terrace, a tourist shouted at us: 'Are you nuts?!' Well, it was hard to explain to him why we were taking these pictures..."

When we had these thousands of pictures, we used them as the basis for creating new concepts of what we wanted it to look like in our game: broken buildings with dust and destruction everywhere. We also took a look at some of the 200 movies that have been shot in the Park. We made the air thick, the atmosphere heavy and dangerous, broke some buildings, knocked down some trees, added some frightening fog, set places on fire... All we had to do was to imagine New York after a war."

Gilles Benois, art director







Art and technology

"The dimly lit environment is a very good example of the new possibilities. But also when those lights are physically rendered and can be moved, hung, broken... For a universe like *Alone in the Dark*, those features are particularly important because they form part of the gameplay itself. For example, some places can't be reached in the total dark, so the search for a way to light your way becomes a challenge in itself.

We have developed a specific lighting engine which allows us to have as many realtime lights as we want in a scene, where other game engines are limited to three realtime lights. The method we use is called 'deferred', and the only limit is the amount of the surface of the screen taken by the pixels of the rendered light, rather than on the number of lights itself in the scene.

HDR (high dynamic range) allows us to give the backgrounds a more realistic look, with changes of luminosity in real time, replicating the way the human eye receives light. By adding post-process effects like depth-of-field, bloom and many other filters that were only

normally seen in movies before, we can tune each scene to make it look unique depending on what we want the player to see and how we want them to feel. The dynamic environment is a real freedom to create, too. Break a wall, smash a table, handle an object – whatever it is, change your environment by pushing, breaking and assembling things together... It seems that a lot of gamers have been waiting for this for a long time.

But, most of all, the next-gen consoles allow us to put the player in the immensity of Central Park with a total feeling of freedom and yet with a lot of detail everywhere. We want him to be able to visit the real park one day and feel at home, like he has a real 'déjà-vu' feeling when he sees the Bethesda Terrace or Belvedere Castle.

To create the Park at this degree of reality, we used GPS coordinates, satellite views from the Park, hundreds of pictures found on the net... This wouldn't have been possible a few years ago."

Gilles Benois

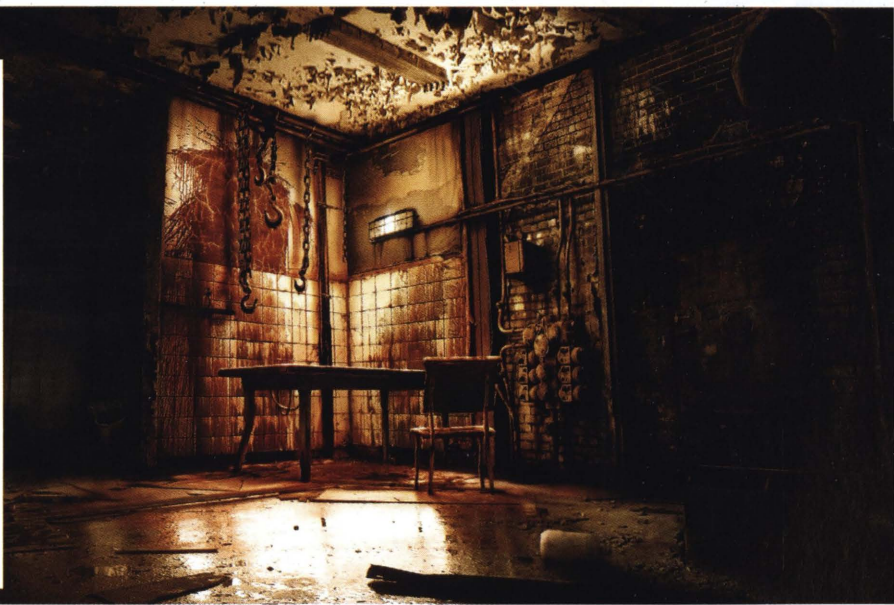




Flash powered

"While it's true that the park is very dark, the hero, Edward Carnby, can use a flashlight at any time and many realtime lights can appear in a scene, so for every scene of the game, we had to imagine every possible situation in terms of lighting. And, with the light having a particular importance throughout the whole game, this is a very long and difficult part of the production process. The fact is that in reality, Central Park at night is a big black rectangle surrounded by illuminated buildings. We couldn't have made a game in a place like that – the player needs to be able to see and take in his environment. So we made a list of what could be light sources coming from 'nowhere' – from an ambulance's beacon to an advertising hoarding, the headlights of a car passing by, or a fire in a building."

Gilles Benois



PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM/EA DEVELOPER: CRITERION RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: VARIOUS

BURNOUT (SERIES)

Art evolution

"In the *Burnout* franchise, art influences technology, not the other way around. Good technology shouldn't significantly change the creative process. Our tools may become more involved, and our pipelines may become more sophisticated, but the actual process of defining an art style, or visualising an asset, or actually making art, should never be governed by whatever fancy new effect our graphics programmers can muster.

With every new *Burnout*, we always acquire some new technology. In most cases, these new technologies are created as a result of art requirements. For example, in *Burnout Revenge* 360, our cars had extra layers of texture to simulate the paint scratching from the car whenever the player rubbed against a wall. (If you rub the car against a wall in *Burnout* 360, you can actually see bits of paint flying off the car.) They also had normal-mapped crumple effects that would appear after collisions, thus gradually revealing a localised damage effect. These were things that our art director asked for from the outset, and the technology was written to accommodate.

This approach to technological innovation was prevalent across most of the *Burnouts*. In *Burnout Revenge*, we had bloom effects, smashable props, and rudimentary screen tints, because they were part of the predefined art style. In *Burnout* 3, we focused on crashes more than we had ever done previously, and as such our vehicle deformation technology improved greatly, and our world collision was more accurate than ever.

In *Burnout* 5, our focus is to deliver a believable open world, and our technology has been designed to facilitate that. With the power of next-generation hardware, and a lot of programming talent, we now have access to features such as realtime shadows, normal mapping, ambient occlusion, reflectivity, and realtime lighting that changes from morning to evening. *B5* also marks the first *Burnout* where the artists have been actively involved in the development of the technology. For example, for the world, we have a graphical shader designed purely for generating road textures, and one for texturing mountains without making the textures tile. Similarly for the vehicles, our early deformation rigs were designed by an artist, making the development of crashes a much smoother process than in previous games. Our vehicle artists also have access to tools that simulate in-game graphics within our authoring package, meaning that they could create and develop cars long before we had playable code.

However, whenever we do choose to include a new piece of technology, our two visual rules still apply. For example, the Xbox version of *Burnout* 2 featured normal mapping, but we chose to use it only on the roads, as this would prove to be the greatest benefit to the player."

'The Burnout team'



The Bruckheimer effect

"The inspiration for *Burnout*'s visual content has never changed much in the lifespan of the franchise. Basically, our games should look and feel like every great Hollywood car chase you have ever seen. When you wrap your car around a lamppost and a big-rig slams into you and explodes, it has to create the same feeling of exhilaration that you would get from watching a car crash in a Bruckheimer movie. Most of these 'feelings' that the

games evoke come from the art. From the outset, we knew that our games always had to look the part. In order to realise this, we did our homework.

Burnout was the first franchise we've worked on with a reading list. We had a list of games to play and we had a list of films to watch, all of which to ensure that – stylistically – we're on the same page. As a result, everyone on the art team understands when one of us

says that we want to recreate the hill sequence from *Bullitt*, or the third act of *The Italian Job*.

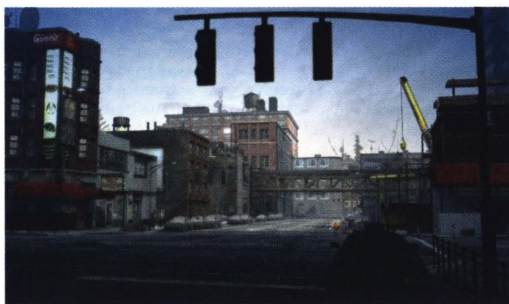
In the earlier *Burnouts*, although our inspiration came from Hollywood car chases, our art style was mostly drawn from arcade games. Anyone who plays a lot of *Ridge Racer* or virtually any AM2 racing game will instantly recognise the style of *Burnouts 1* and *2*. But as the franchise became more clearly defined,

and as the art direction became bolder, our art style began to lean more towards the movies that we have seen.

For example, the El-train sequence from the Downtown track in *Burnout 3* bears more than a passing resemblance to *The French Connection*, and the bridge sequence in the Sunshine Keys track from *Burnout Revenge* is an obvious nod to the same sequence from *Bad Boys 2*."

'The Burnout team'





The 'rules' of the Burnout universe

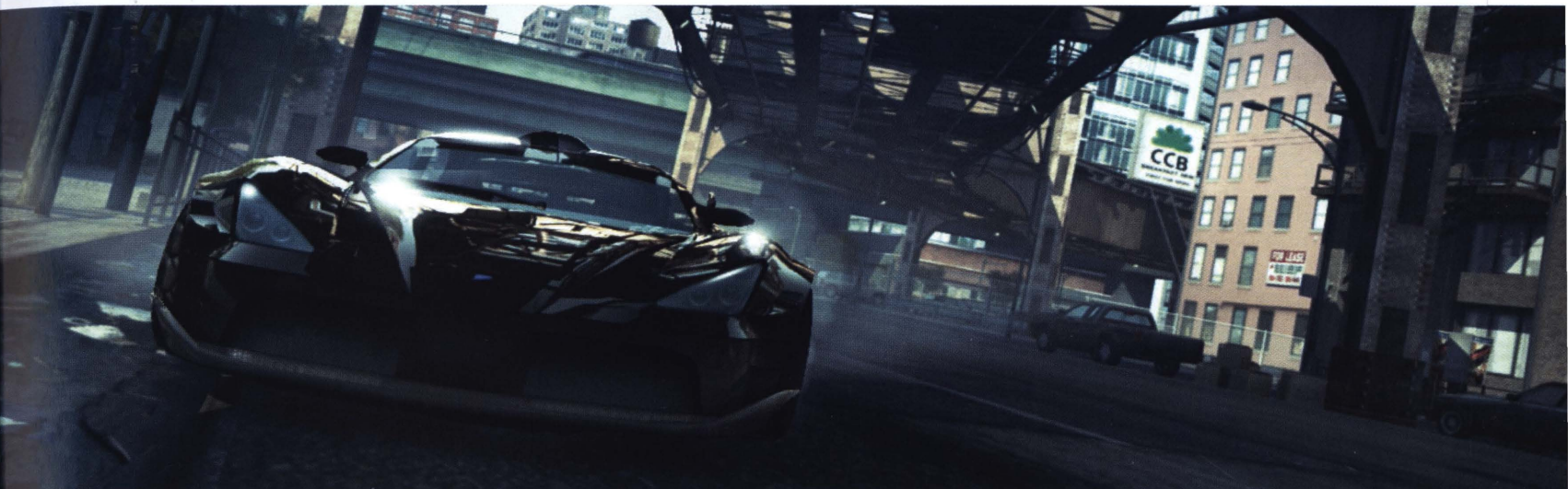
"The *Burnout* franchise has only ever had two visual 'rules':
1. We do the most with the least.
2. It's all about the gameplay.

Because we're always pushing the envelope technologically, the budgets for artwork can become very tight. Also, we might not always be privy to the latest experimental technologies that other teams are using – for example, we've never made a *Burnout* game that used realtime shadows). When we say that we 'do the most with the least', we mean that we take our limitations, push them to their furthest extents, and utilise them in such a way to benefit the player's experience. For example, in *Burnout Revenge*, the polygon budget for the cars was mostly biased towards the body. Our wheels were textured on, our interiors were very low-res, and we didn't have any drivers, but the benefit can always be seen when the cars deform in a crash. This philosophy extends to other art disciplines. For example, with our tracks, if we only have a few thousand polygons allocated to a street, the majority of those polygons are always nearest the road, where the player is most likely to see them. Were you ever to go above street level, or see the game in wireframe, you would probably be surprised at how light our models actually are.

Regarding the second rule, virtually every artistic decision is made with gameplay in mind. For example, our tracks have always been designed to make the game feel as fast as possible. In the last two *Burnouts*, we have had what has come to be known as 'Burnout scale', where everything in the world is 50 per cent larger than it should be, and every road lane is 50 per cent wider. Add to this a wide-angle camera effect, and the result is a track where the player can always drift around the corners whilst at the same time feeling a sensation of speed. Whenever we place street furniture, we will always place it close to the road, as the brain registers high-frequency detail as speed. To guide the player around the tracks, we will always place the chevrons in such a way that the player can navigate without actually looking at the chevron directions ('there's a bright green thing on my left – it must be time to turn right').

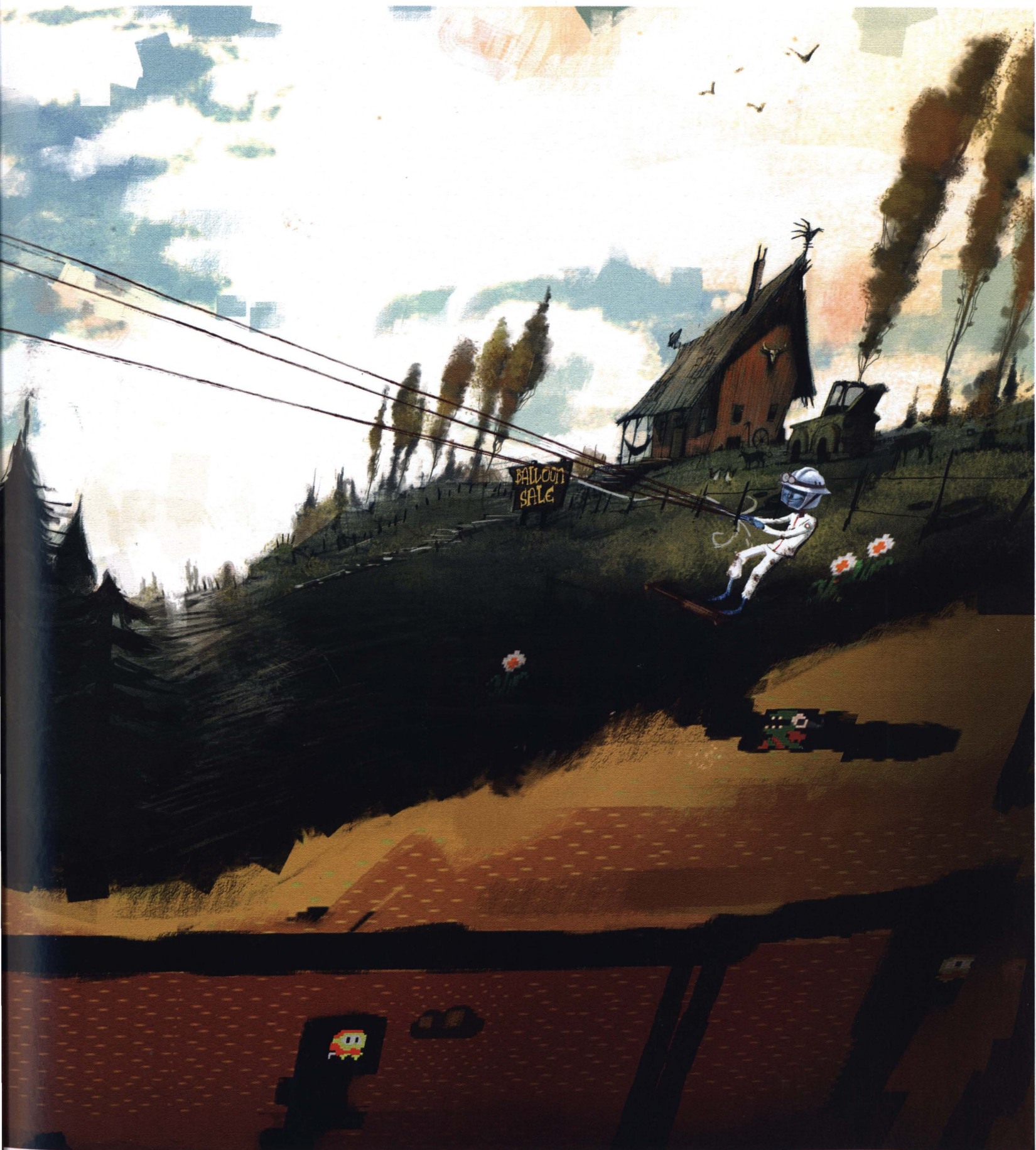
We all know that when all is said and done, we're making a game. We're making the best-looking game we possibly can, but it's a game nonetheless and that will always come first. Our visual rules aren't really rules so much as our collective attempts to get the most out of our medium, and that isn't the sort of thing that one has to forcibly maintain." *The Burnout team*







EMROCA.COM





Links to the past

"Several of our senior artists have been with Blizzard as far back as the first *WarCraft*, and are so familiar with those games that they really knew what the units looked like inside and out. Similarly, our head of creative development, Chris Metzen, is constantly going back to the old game manuals to find reference for, say, what landmark would exist in this location at this point in time. Labouring over those little details is what drives the art team to make every nook and cranny in the world exciting."

Justin Thavirat, art director, WOW

PUBLISHER: VIVENDI UNIVERSAL DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT RELEASE: 2004 FORMAT: PC, MAC

WORLD OF WARCRAFT







Piece by piece

"[Developing *World Of Warcraft* has] just been a matter of taking it one zone at a time, and then juxtaposing interesting-looking zones to create a transition between them that draws the player in. Blizzard has the luxury of being able to sit and craft until we're excited about where our games are; we've had artists choosing to work late nights redoing their stuff – before release they must have repainted the characters dozens of times. But with a game like this, you really have to keep moving forward. We have the ability to rework art elements at a later date, and we look at that on a case-by-case basis, but the majority of the time we try to take what we've learned and apply it to the next piece."

Justin Thavirat







Orcs and outfits

"The style of the Warcraft storyline gives us the opportunity to express a lot of personality in familiar visual elements, like our orcs being martial and shamanistic, or our noble-looking blood elves having their dark side with regard to their views on magic.

We also favour exaggerated, strong shapes and bold colours, starting each new zone from a colour study and

then-picking the palette right out of the paintings.

And we gain a lot from having a very collaborative development environment – for instance, the outfits and masks the Defias wear were made just as cool elements that players would love to put on, but the designers drew on them to create a whole storyline."

Justin Thavirat



PUBLISHER: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (UBISOFT MONTREAL) RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC

ASSASSIN'S CREED



Inspiration

"The sources of inspiration for the game's visual content are a mix between historical content, books on 12th-century mid-East history, and movies like *Kingdom Of Heaven* or *The Name Of The Rose*. The preproduction team worked a lot on the historical aspect of this game; they amassed tons of pictures and books to reproduce the look of the main cities that we visit in the game, like Damas, Acre, Jerusalem... The concept artists and I took inspiration from these references and tried to push the art to the next level using our style.

But even though the action takes place in the Holy Land during the Third Crusade, we really want the game to have very modern and cutting-edge visuals. Our visual signature aspires to be in line with the emotional experience that the player will live instead of concentrating on portraying a specific

setting. Of course, each city will be faithfully recreated, each of them with its own architectural and cultural style. But our focus is to give each location a visual treatment that will represent the emotional experience the player will undergo.

To achieve such a result, we used a lot of post-production visual effects very similar to those used by the movie industry. Indeed, *Assassin Creed's* art direction and visual effects have been highly influenced by films, especially for post effects and filters inspired by movies ranging from *Man On Fire* to *Black Hawk Down* and *The Butterfly Effect*. This was not possible on the previous generation of consoles.

At the end of the day, the look of the game will be very different than the classic CG effects videogames often use."

Raphael Lacoste, artistic director



Realism versus fantasy

"As I worked more on fantasy-style games before *Assassin's Creed*, such as *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*, this [game] was quite new for me. Indeed, it is hard because you don't want to fall in the Uncanny Valley, but, as you have a realistic style, you have to pay attention to a lot of details, and those details can be your enemies. Paying too much attention to details can be too risky, memory-wise – next-gen still has limits! – and also dangerous artistically because you may lose the stylisation and the main visual composition focus, which you need before anything.

This is what I am trying to achieve – not being too realistic; don't lose too much time on mouse shit, but keep the edgy look.

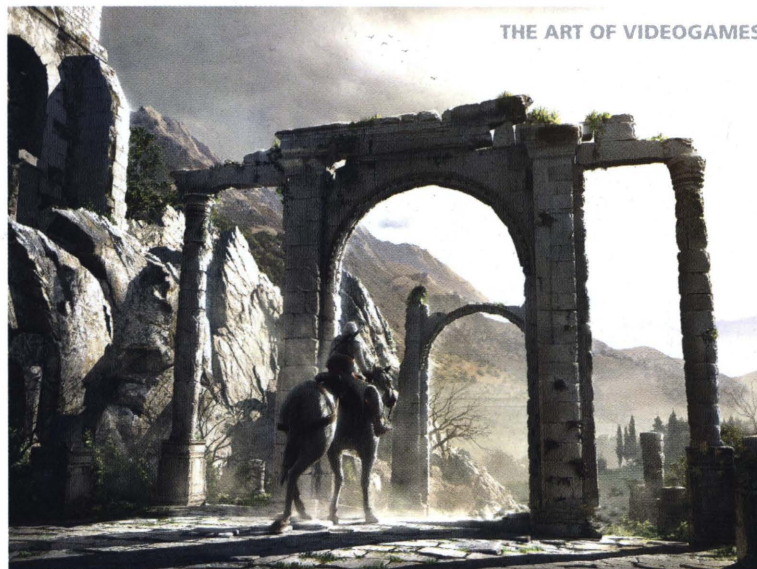
I like how Ridley Scott worked on

Kingdom Of Heaven: even if he did an historical movie, Jerusalem does not look like the real Jerusalem, because it is better like that, more impressive – he exaggerated the proportions, made an artistic interpretation of a real place. I also like the filters used in Ridley Scott's movie – it brings a modern feeling to the past, and this is what we are trying to do from our side: connect the past to the present.

At the end of the day, the game will not look like a *Prince Of Persia* at all – we have tons of real references in our game, but we will keep it artistic and moody. This will make for a real interesting experience, not like a documentary on the Third Crusades but like a sensible experience in this era..."

Raphael Lacoste





Art and technology

"Sure, next-gen helps a lot, but you may know that sometimes less is more. This is maybe the paradox, but as an artist, I am really happy to have more sometimes."

We have an incredible global lighting system: the shadows are sharp and cast through every single object – even the smallest – over the whole kingdom and its cities. One of the funny things is that we have a real, functional day cycle system in the game...

The way how light reacts on surfaces is really efficient now. The old walls of our cities are almost there: as we interact with everything in the game, we are close to all of these different materials and they

reinforce the feeling of immersion.

I also like the ability that we have now to apply filters, to do picture treatment in real time. It was more difficult on the previous-gen platforms.

By the way, the thing is that we still need to put efforts in the right place. What we have chosen in *Assassin's* and wanted to showcase will be really impressive. When you jump from roof to roof – seeing all the city around you, the smoke pouring out of the chimneys, the far cathedrals and guard towers – you will have an incredible feeling of immersion in a huge living and breathing world."

Raphael Lacoste



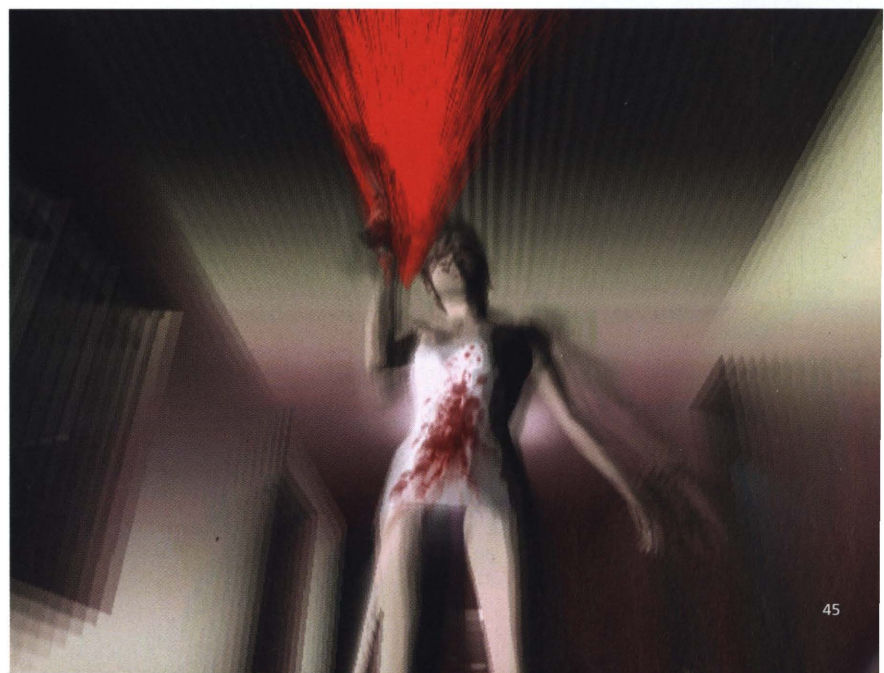


PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE** RELEASE: **2005** FORMAT: **GC, PS2**

KILLER 7









Reining in ideas

"It is always a challenge to match your own work to a style or genre, especially if that style is strong and already well established, as with *Fable*. Then again, it also gives you a lot to build on. The most important thing is that whatever you create must fit into the world that has been built, but not be inhibited by it. I think that as long as it fulfils that requirement, you can let your imagination go wild, and then, if you have to, rein the idea in a bit. Better to start with a strong idea that you can tailor to suit a game than a boring one. I also think that it helps if the artists and designers around you have a wider frame of reference than other games!"

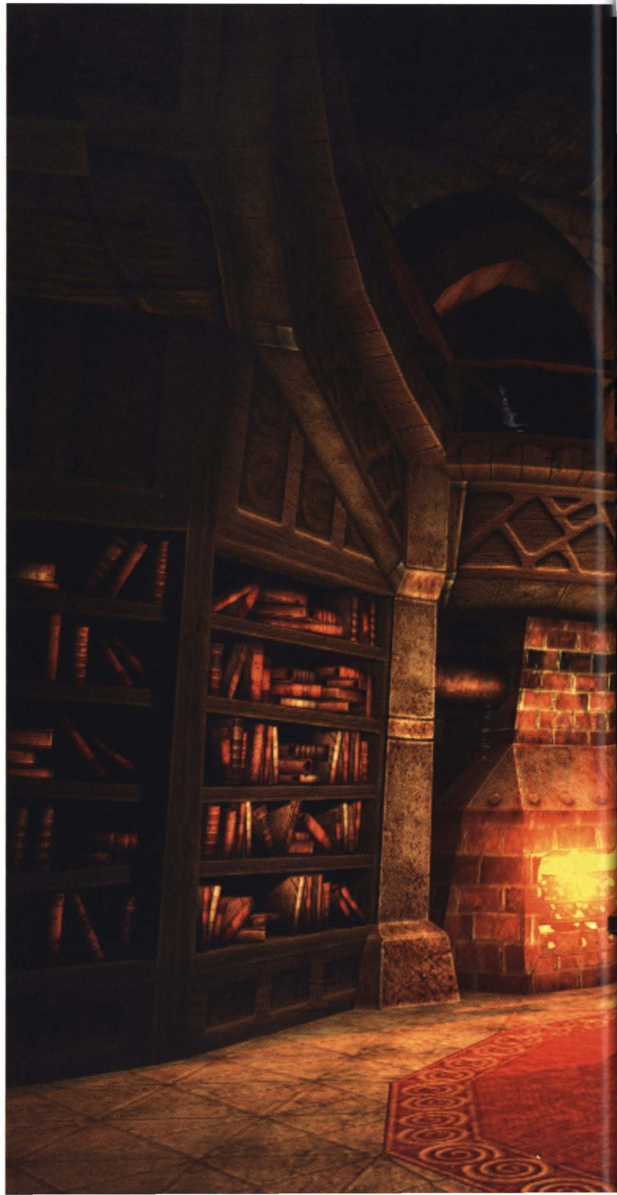
Mike McCarthy, concept artist, *Fable 2*

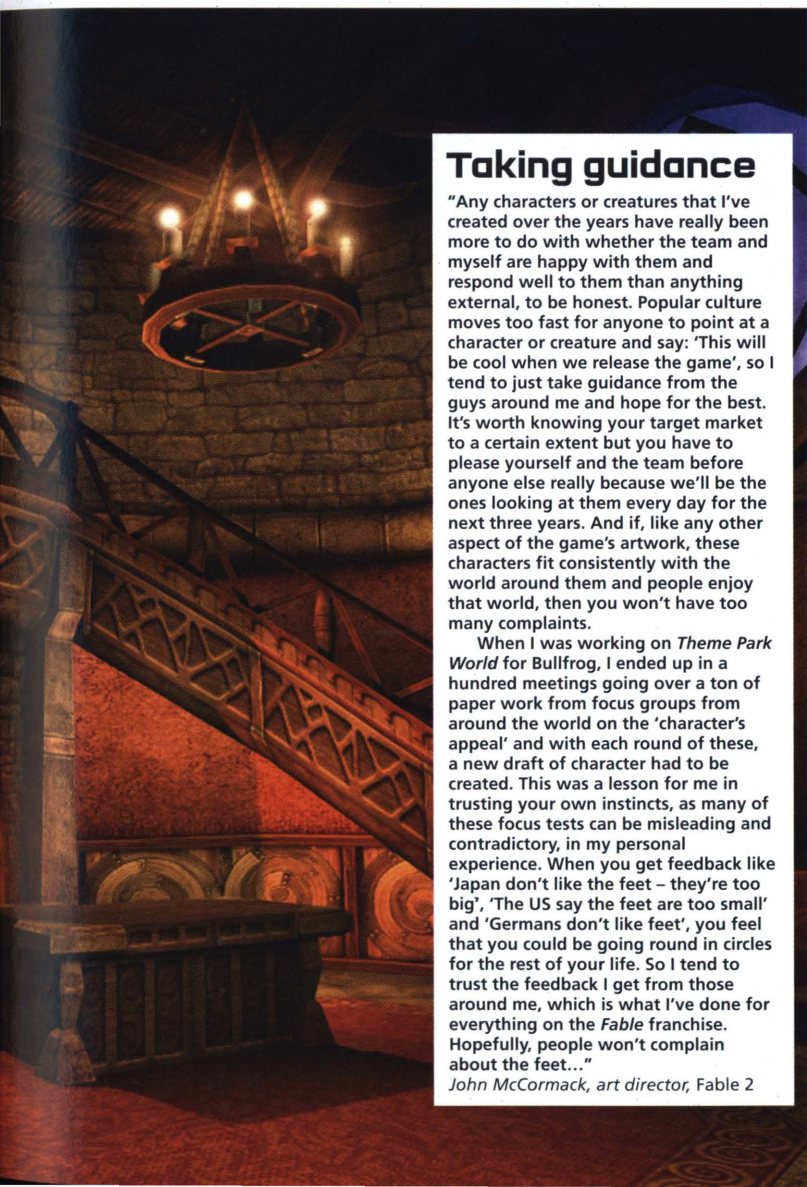
PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: LIONHEAD RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: 360, XBOX, PC

FABLE (SERIES)









Taking guidance

"Any characters or creatures that I've created over the years have really been more to do with whether the team and myself are happy with them and respond well to them than anything external, to be honest. Popular culture moves too fast for anyone to point at a character or creature and say: 'This will be cool when we release the game', so I tend to just take guidance from the guys around me and hope for the best. It's worth knowing your target market to a certain extent but you have to please yourself and the team before anyone else really because we'll be the ones looking at them every day for the next three years. And if, like any other aspect of the game's artwork, these characters fit consistently with the world around them and people enjoy that world, then you won't have too many complaints."

When I was working on *Theme Park World* for Bullfrog, I ended up in a hundred meetings going over a ton of paper work from focus groups from around the world on the 'character's appeal' and with each round of these, a new draft of character had to be created. This was a lesson for me in trusting your own instincts, as many of these focus tests can be misleading and contradictory, in my personal experience. When you get feedback like 'Japan don't like the feet - they're too big', 'The US say the feet are too small' and 'Germans don't like feet', you feel that you could be going round in circles for the rest of your life. So I tend to trust the feedback I get from those around me, which is what I've done for everything on the *Fable* franchise. Hopefully, people won't complain about the feet..."

John McCormack, art director, *Fable 2*



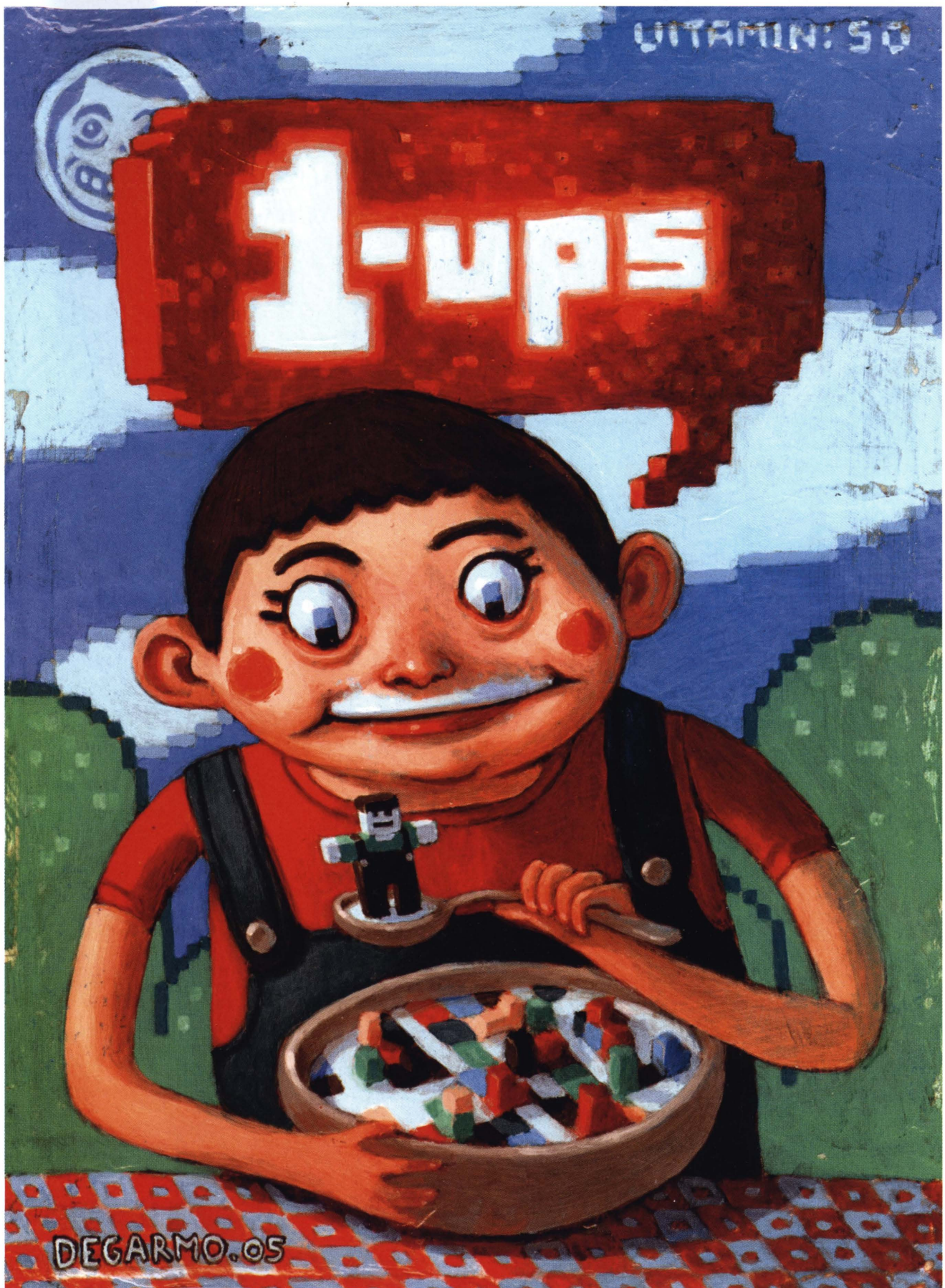


Scary monsters

"I always want characters in games to look great – and obviously play well – whether they be the hero or the various enemies you meet along the way. All characters should have a strong silhouette (which is something I have learned here) so they retain their identity even at a distance. I like to see monsters that scare the hell out of me and heroes that look like they could wipe the floor with anyone, anytime. Again, I think it's good to start fantastical and see what happens... Hell, this is supposed to be *fun!*"

Mike McCarthy







GOD OF WAR II

PUBLISHER: SCEE DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (SCE STUDIOS SANTA MONICA) RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PS2

GOD OF WAR II



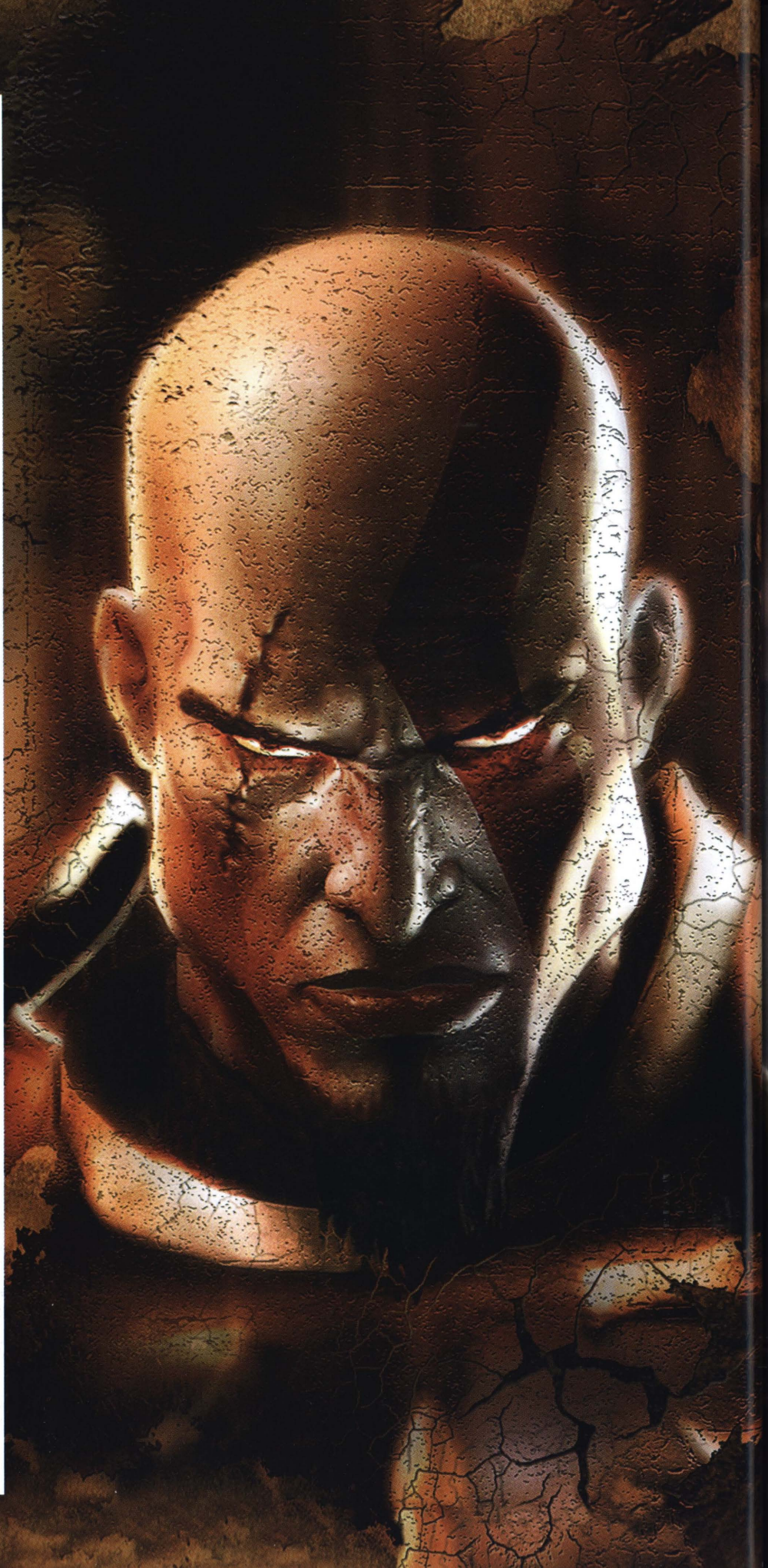
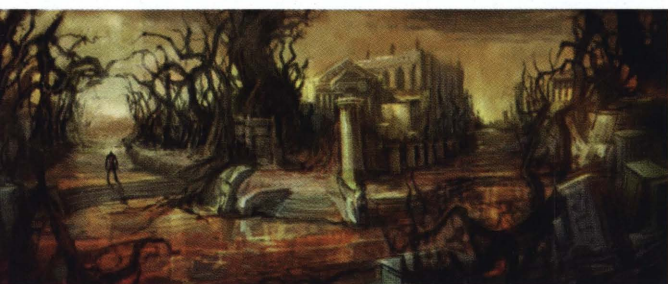
















PUBLISHER: SCEE DEVELOPER: EVOLUTION STUDIOS RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PS3

MOTORSTORM

Inspiration

"We're big fans of most off-road events, and wanted to couple our favourite styles in an all-out, off-road festival somewhere with a sense of grandeur. This had us searching a lot of locations, before we settled on Monument Valley, which is the perfect blend of hostility and iconic environment. Multiple trips out to Utah and Arizona gave us stacks of photo and video reference from the ground, plus some exclusive, yet completely unrestricted access to fly and film using the latest helicopter-based gimbal HD camera systems.

We also populated the in-game stages with banners and ads in a style that gave the impression of an ad-hoc collection – roughly organised like a festival of off-road racing would be, with some commissioned graffiti pieces from notable real-world graffiti crews to lend some extra credibility and attitude to the visuals."

Simon O'Brien, creative lead

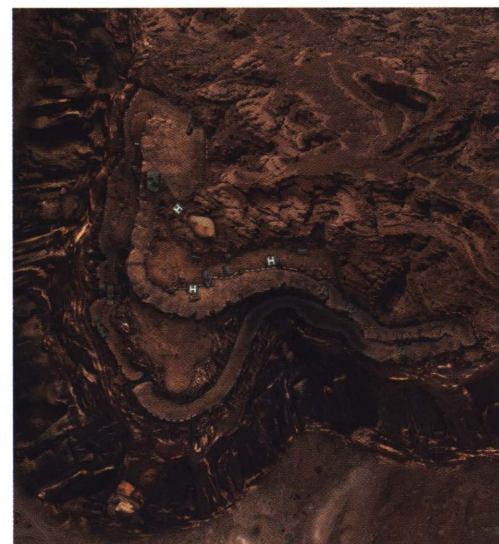


Kickstarting a new IP

"The mantra we have here at Evolution is one of constantly striving for great visuals and realism, due to our heritage in the flight-sim and *WRC* products. Reference gathering is more often than not the preferred starting point for a lot of our games, although this time around, as we were generating a totally new IP, it also informed a lot of the decisions we needed to make regarding gameplay and track themes.

We then go on to produce mood boards for each environment plus video and render targets to provide the production team with a visual benchmark throughout development. Concept art for the characters and vehicles within the world are collected and reviewed on the studio walls to give everyone a clear and united vision of progress. We strove for continual, consistent creative direction throughout preproduction and into production to maintain a robust vision."

Simon O'Brien





Art and technology

"The advent of PS3 has allowed us to realise our vision more closely than ever, now that we have the processing power to render our worlds in the details they demand. Some of the techniques at our disposal now, such as HDR lighting, complex shader constructions and advanced motion blur, allow for much more control from a creative point of view, as we can play around with post effects in real time to achieve a more interesting vision for titles such as *MotorStorm*.

Being able to gain instant feedback from minute changes in environmental effects or complex physical interactions gives artists a great sense of satisfaction, but perhaps more importantly allows us to hit deadlines whilst being totally creative with the graphical effects. A case in point is the environmental mood and lighting that can be seen in a title such as *MotorStorm*, which was facilitated through the ability to change all manner of bloom, fogging, lighting and exposure behaviour on the fly."

Simon O'Brien







PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION** DEVELOPER: **VARIOUS** RELEASE: **2007** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED









PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: VARIOUS

JUST CAUSE

Inspiration

"First of all, we wanted to have a believable backdrop for the game's key story – the revolution and overthrowing of a corrupt regime and dictatorship. We started taking bits and pieces from countries with historical themes in this line and moulded them together to create a subconscious feeling of 'realism'. We were also looking for something really colourful and vibrant as we were primarily making a console game and wanted something that really stood out compared to the many desaturated shooters out there. Cuba was a great spark of inspiration in many aspects, but I also think South America, and especially the jungle environments, were a real inspiration. We also looked into many tropical island environments.

For villages and smaller urban environments we looked at Guatemala and Antigua.

We obtained a lot of book references on tropical vegetation for inspiration (for example, Thomas Struth's *New Pictures From Paradise*) and we also made early concept art to help convey the feel we were looking for, primarily to set the tone. We continued throughout the project with this and made some inspirational pieces for the team that still takes pride of place in the reception area of the studio.

We put a lot of effort into the vegetation and re-made all assets in the full vegetation-set at least five times before we got it right. It was a hard balancing act trying to have variation at

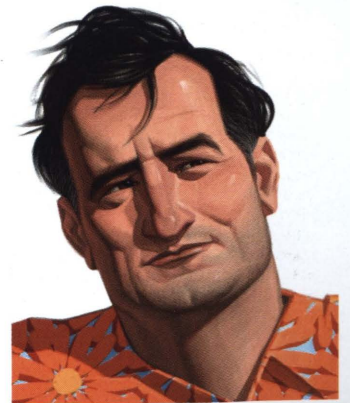
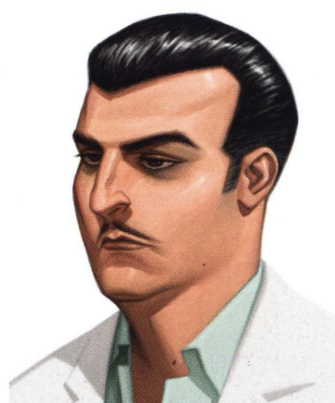
four levels for each vegetation type (ground, middle, high and top levels) with challenging resource limitations. We analysed how vegetation clustered and took a resourceful and efficient route on this that still visually held up in the end. We never actually made trips to the locations that we targeted as visual references, but I took the opportunity of shooting references on my family vacation to Thailand that proved very useful in the end.

We also sent Oskar Blomberg to the botanical garden in Stockholm to take loads of reference photos there. (Apologies again for any mess!) He got great help there and the ladder they lent us was really useful for those

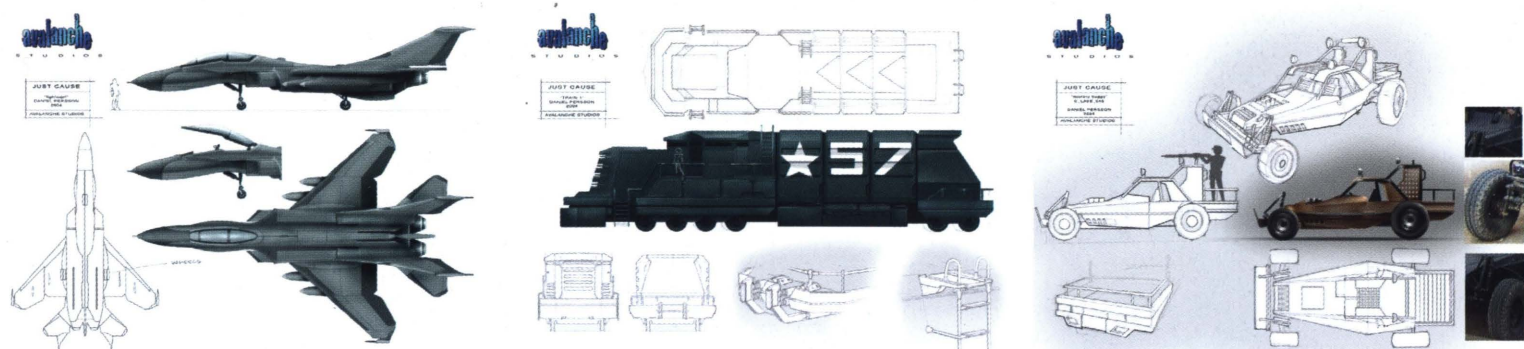
hard-to-reach places where all the cool leaves were at.

For the characters we worked with renowned Argentine illustrator Oscar Chichoni, who also provided a lot of help and inspiration on South America in general. Many of his character designs had their foundation in caricature stereotypes (the South American drug baron, etc) and his characteristic style in the conceptual art had a large impact on the final appearance on the game characters – perhaps making them slightly unrealistic in comparison with the rest of the game world, but this also added immediately to the overall South American 'banana republic' feel we were looking for."

Stefan Ljungqvist, art director



JUST CAUSE



Art and technology

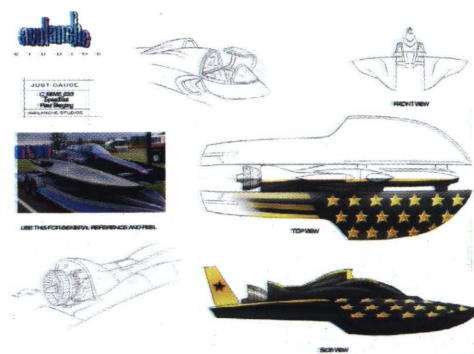
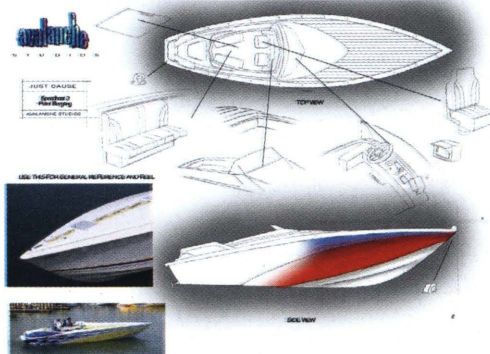
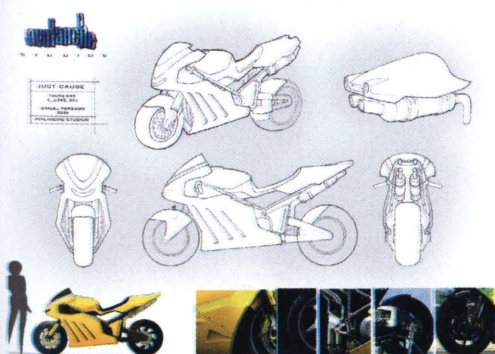
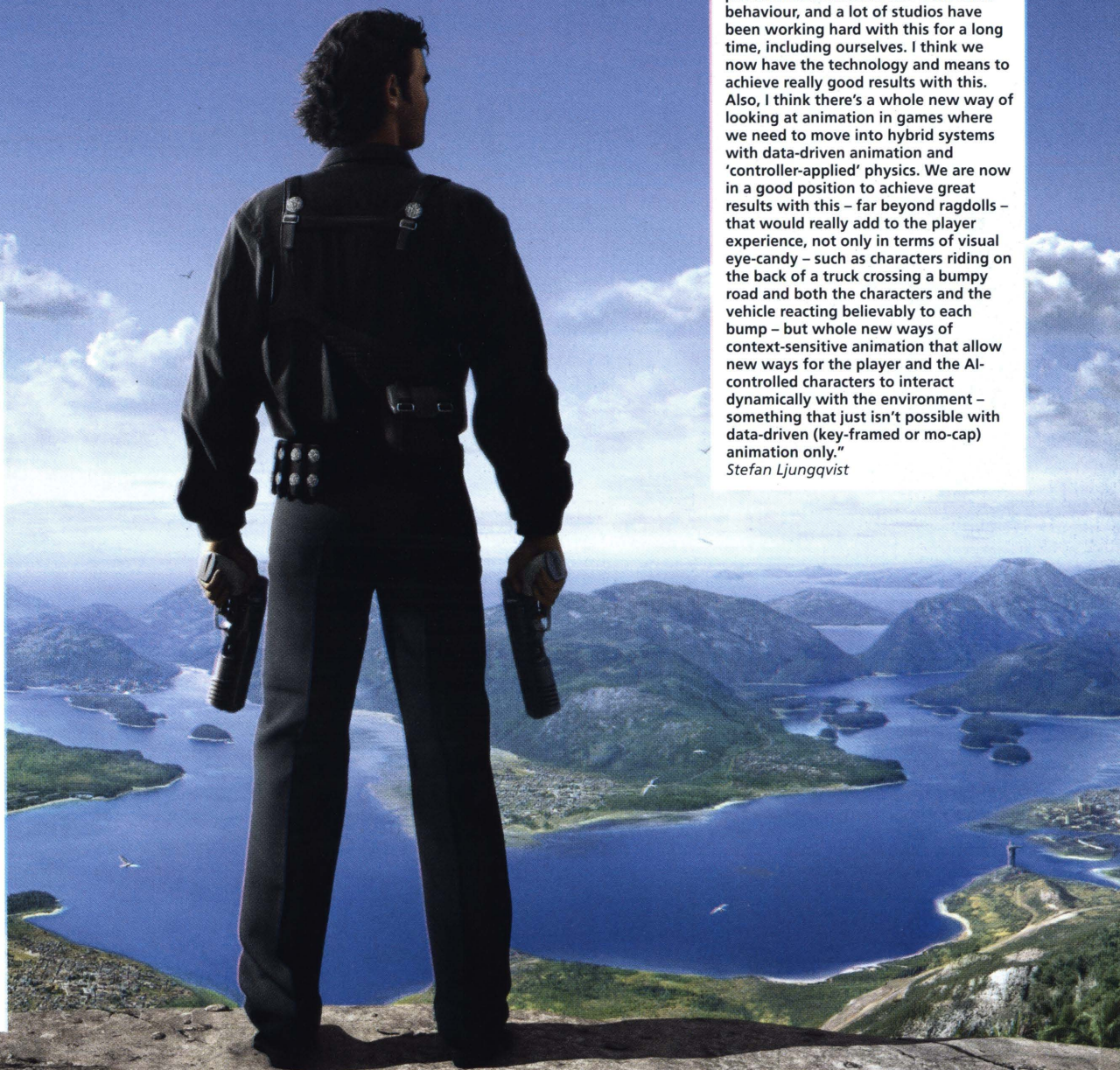
"Right now there's a lot of buzz in the industry around realistic rendering of photorealistic humans and believable behaviour, and a lot of studios have been working hard with this for a long time, including ourselves. I think we now have the technology and means to achieve really good results with this. Also, I think there's a whole new way of looking at animation in games where we need to move into hybrid systems with data-driven animation and 'controller-applied' physics. We are now in a good position to achieve great results with this – far beyond ragdolls – that would really add to the player experience, not only in terms of visual eye-candy – such as characters riding on the back of a truck crossing a bumpy road and both the characters and the vehicle reacting believably to each bump – but whole new ways of context-sensitive animation that allow new ways for the player and the AI-controlled characters to interact dynamically with the environment – something that just isn't possible with data-driven (key-framed or mo-cap) animation only."

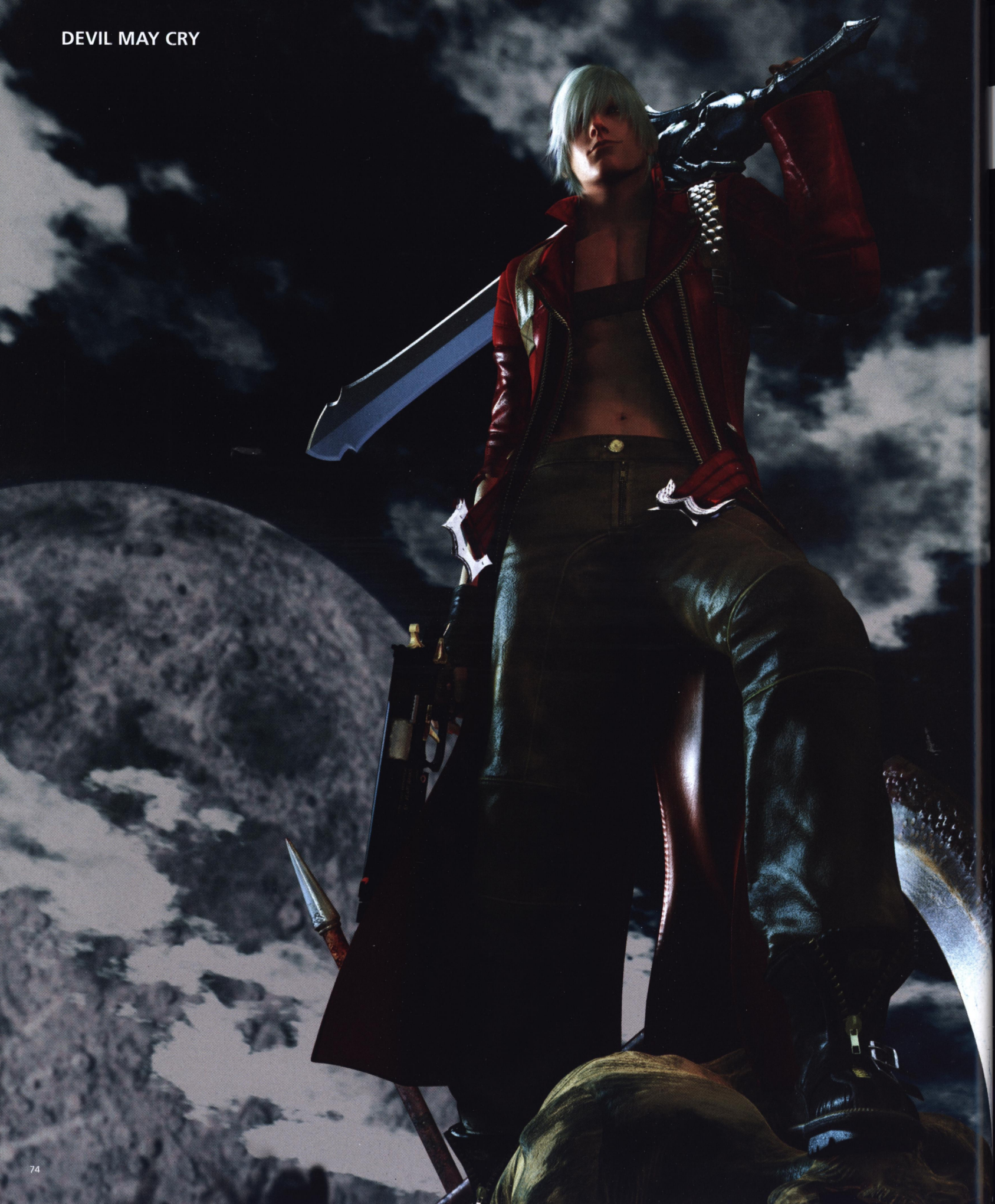
Stefan Ljungqvist

Recreating a living world

"Obviously using a lot of photo references is key. Also, analysing how light and weather affects vegetation was essential. The vegetation in *Just Cause* was our first real attempt to create complex vegetation types and we have come far since. I think one of the biggest challenges with the vegetation for *Just Cause* was that not only did we need to create fantastic-looking different types of vegetation, but we needed to make them look really good on all platforms from the PS2 and up, essentially being charged with not making major changes between the different platforms in terms of number of trees/bushes and preferably their quality. Also, we had to make our vegetation look equally good both from a distance and up close, and from all angles, as you can go pretty much anywhere in *Just Cause*. This caused a lot of interesting challenges in terms of resource handling and visualisation that required a really tight collaboration between artists and programmers. In the end, I think it all came together nicely and I would like to express my gratitude to our very talented team of programmers and artists that made the vegetation really come alive. That said, I think you'll see much more advanced and realistic-looking environments in our upcoming games..."

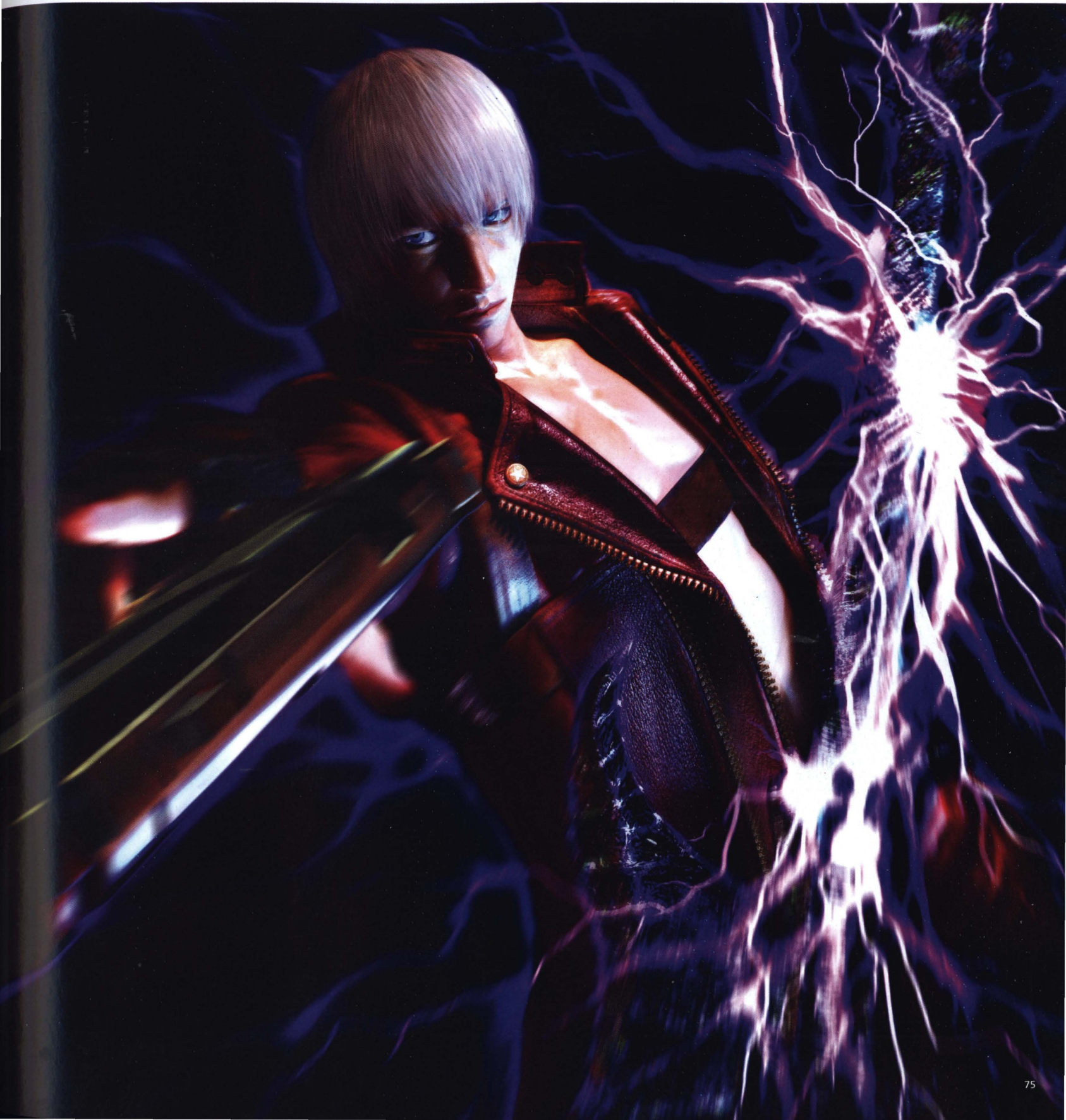
Stefan Ljungqvist





PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (PRODUCTION STUDIO 4) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: PC, PS2

DEVIL MAY CRY (SERIES)









PUBLISHER: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (UBISOFT MONTREAL) RELEASE DATE: 2004 FORMAT: VARIOUS

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

Art and technology

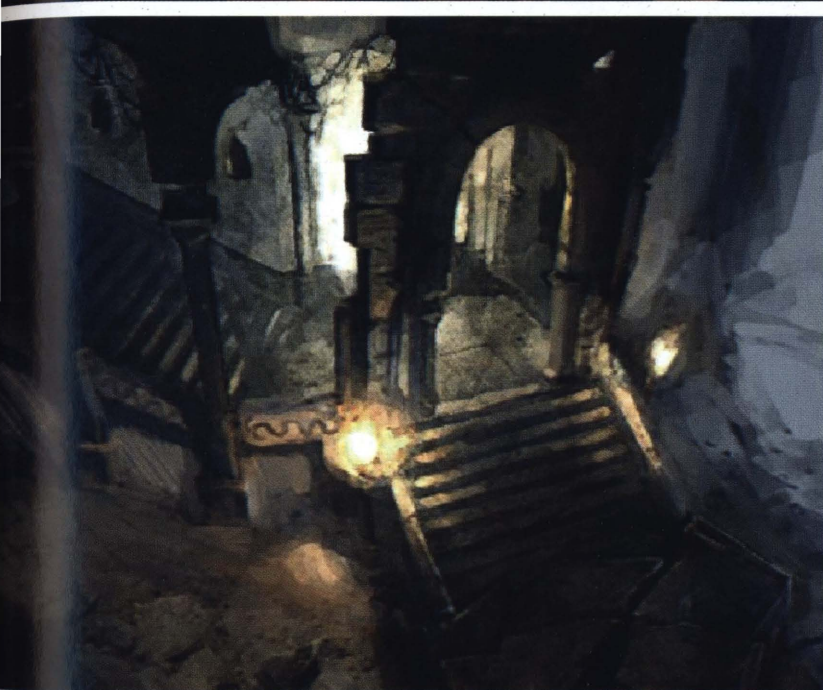
"The power of the new consoles clearly allows us to expand our artistic vision and give the game a unique and compelling visual signature.

It allows us to create realtime visuals that more closely resemble the amazing illustrations done by our concept artists, whether they are realistic or fantasy. Additionally we can make our game universe more credible and immersive by pushing the attention to detail in the environments. When you combine that with much more realistic characters (more

polygons, more advanced shaders, more diversity of animations), advanced lighting techniques (occlusion lighting, for example) and advanced filters, you create a world of visuals that is going to suck the player in. This is important from a gameplay perspective because a player who is fully immersed in a game world will be much more susceptible to the experiences — both emotional and visceral — that we hope for them to feel."

*Mickael Labat, artistic director,
Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within*







Inspiration

"The artistic inspiration for *The Two Thrones* came principally from photographs we took while in Morocco. Reference books on Islamic architecture gave us great ideas for the environments, while Islamic mythology provided inspiration for characters – in particular the 'Dark Prince'. The iconoclastic side of Islamic art allowed us to keep a timeless feeling to the environments in *T2T* which

we happily took advantage of since we did not need to necessarily specify a specific historical period in which the game took place. This flexibility fitted perfectly with our 'fantasy' approach to the game, given that ours was a world of 'djinnns' and monsters against which the Prince had to fight."

*Olivier Leonardi, artistic director,
Prince Of Persia: The Two Thrones*



PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: **IN-HOUSE (UBISOFT MONTREAL)** RELEASE: **2005** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES



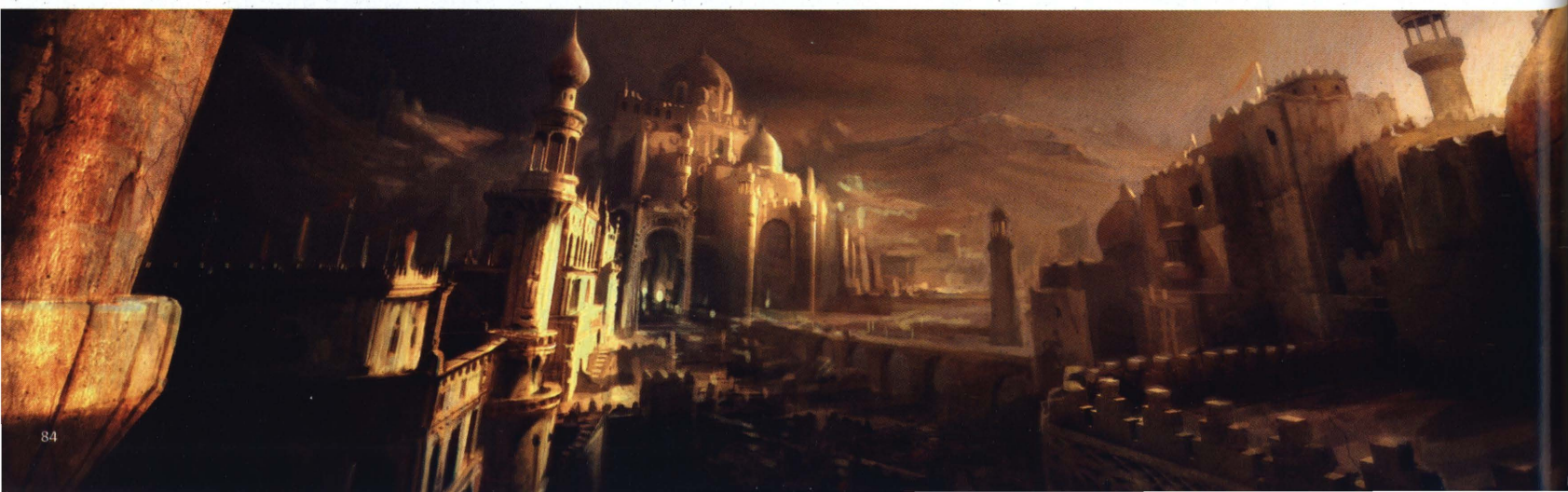
Updating the Prince Of Persia legacy

"In T2T we wanted to show a more mature prince – more aggressive and capable of overcoming the overwhelming challenge that presented itself at the beginning of the game. We were careful to demonstrate this with various scars covering his body, in the marks and lines of his face and in his more defined muscle tone. Most important to us in communicating the Prince's hardships was the graphical treatment of the sand 'infection', which was designed to resemble a living wound rather than simply a tattoo.

T2T was also a return for our Prince to his native home town so it was important for us that the player be able to feel the power of the city with a semi-permanent view of the tower of Babylon. The levels that took place on the rooftops of Babylon gave us an opportunity to show the city below, creating an immediate sense of immersion with the impressive sense of scope.

Finally, it was important that the player be able to feel a sense of urgency throughout the game by witnessing the impact of the combat raging throughout the city – small battles as the last defenders were defeated, enormous amounts of destruction to the buildings and walls of the city, fire and smoke rising in the distance, etc. All these elements combined to create the feeling that the Prince's hometown – your hometown – was being destroyed systematically and that if you did not succeed in your quest, it would be razed to the ground."

Olivier Leonardi











PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: EPIC GAMES RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: 360

GEARS OF WAR

Inspiration

"The visual identity of *Gears Of War* was headed by our art director, Jerry O'Flaherty, and executed by art lead Chris Perna. The main focus for the visual ideas of the game was to have something fresh and new, yet something familiar. So you have some very fantastic elements but there is always that grounding in reality with something familiar and believable. Cliff [Bleszinski] and the other project leads would contribute and come up with ideas, but everything was filtered through Jerry to ensure the game had a very consistent and cohesive style.

We have an amazing concept artist, James Hawkins, who consistently created incredible stuff for the artists to make. The bulk of the models I produced came with very detailed concepts and 'rough-poly' models that James created. In those instances I didn't try to bring my style to things, I simply tried to faithfully recreate and bring to life what he had already envisioned. It's been the greatest art training in the world, following in his footsteps. I'm very lucky and have learned so much from everybody that I've worked with since I've been here.

In addition to James we had environment concept artists that worked closely with Jerry. He really focused on getting a cinematic feel from the artists, ensuring that each concept had a very specific mood and feel with the lighting, camera angle, and style. The concepts were adhered to very closely by the level designers which contributed greatly to the cinematic feel. Everybody from environment artists to character modellers to animators to level designers worked very closely together and excelled as a team, so it was incredibly motivating for the entire length of the project.

Every single day I was amazed and inspired by the cool stuff that was being created around me. Jerry and Chris did an excellent job funneling all of that creative passion and ensured that we always stayed on track with our vision, quality, and style."

Pete Hayes, artist







'Destroyed Beauty'

"With the look and feel already determined, all I had to do was stay consistent and true to the concepts and the spirit of the game universe."

'Destroyed Beauty' means just that – something that was once beautiful but has now taken on a new form of beauty in its decay. Kind of like the 'beautiful ugly' of hideous monsters. My job was pretty easy since the bulk of what I created for the game was weapons and vehicles. The concepts and vision for the military aspects of the game were already

amazing, so I just tried to make them as believable as possible. When you have a chainsaw on an assault rifle obviously you've got a little bit of a stretch, but I tried to make it at least somewhat feasible.

One of the most enjoyable and challenging aspects of my job is making things work, making them seem like a real part of the world and hopefully add to the immersion of the game.

I tried to keep my models fairly clean because I wanted to pass along a nice

canvas for the texture artists to work on. Chris Perna, Mike Buck and Maury Mountain textured the bulk of my models and they did an amazing job, giving each weapon or vehicle a very worn and beaten look. They added all of the minor dents, scratches, worn paint, etc, that brought my work to life and gave it a very realistic and believable feel.

As far as lessons learned, it's really hard to pinpoint one thing. I think in general everybody just refined their processes – work flow, tips and tricks, etc.

I don't know that there was a single revelation that can be singled out. As far as me personally, I learned a great deal on the project and refined my craft and techniques. That's the number one thing I love about my job. There is no end, no finish line, just constant progression... always striving for something better and always learning.

I work with the most dedicated and talented people in the industry and love going to work each day."

Pete Hayes





Creating an enemy race

"Chris Perna and Kevin Lanning were working on *Gears* very early on and they came up with the initial Locust grunt soldier look and feel. Once Jerry and James started on the project, the concept was refined even further and new enemies were created. The basic concept of the enemy was driven by the game storyline, so you had some very defining ideas behind them. They lived underground, so what would their skin look like? They have some human characteristics but not 100 per cent, so where did they come from? They understand military weapons; they have structure within their ranks, so how does that affect their 'uniforms' and other accessories?"

The main concept of the Locust was they had to have humanoid characteristics, but were slightly mutated on. More than anything we wanted them to be big, bad and very scary. They had to have some intelligence to them but also had to be very barbaric and ruthless killers. We didn't want you to be amazed at how weird or crazy they looked, we wanted you to be

very afraid of them. We wanted to trigger an emotional response when you or your teammates got killed and make you even more cautious or scared of future encounters.

The shapes and main attributes for each enemy type are often driven by the gameplay needs. For example, Cliff and the design team may request a larger, lumbering type of enemy with heavy firepower. That defines that we need a big guy with a big gun. Jerry would then work with James to meet the gameplay requirements while coming up with something that looks incredibly cool and fits within the game universe.

Kevin Lanning, the main character modeller on the project, would then work his magic with the concept and flesh out the ideas even further, working closely with Jerry, James and Chris throughout the model. Because everything was carefully considered and meticulously crafted up front we were able to proceed through every phase of content creation with the utmost confidence and eliminate mid-project redesigns."

Pete Hayes







PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: VARIOUS

TOMB RAIDER LEGEND



Stylised reality

"There has always been an approach of 'stylised reality' throughout the series. All of the characters, creatures and environments have an artistic expression that separates them from other titles.

We aim to make the environments and

enemies feel as convincing and believable as possible even if there are fantasy elements. Even in a world that isn't entirely realistic there has to be a rule set that is both believable and consistent in order for the game to feel credible.

Historical, archaeological and architectural reference forms the basis for a believable game world which we can add stylisation and fantasy elements to in order to complete the experience.

This sense of believability through

storytelling, character evolution, and environmental and architectural integrity all contribute to a realistic 'wrapper' around the fantasy within the videogame universe."

Darrell Gallagher, director of art





Visual evolution

"One of the challenges with such a well-known franchise is balancing the need to develop and evolve the IP from both visual and creative perspectives whilst retaining the *Tomb Raider* heritage and meeting the expectations of the public. The first title is now ten years old and as a result the visuals have improved considerably over this period; therefore from a purely technical standpoint one of the biggest differences is in the ability to increase the level of detail in the characters and environments. The artistic tastes and expectations of the audience has also matured; as a result we tend to use a more sophisticated range of colour palette and progression, visual language, mood, lighting, texturing and shading as a way of expressing the visual direction. The scale of games has also increased greatly since the first game was developed; the latest games tend to be much bigger and more complex visually. We approach the development in a far more structured way than games of ten years ago, with a great deal of effort being put into preproduction and the development of each title from an artistic standpoint."

Darrell Gallagher, director of art

PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PC, PS2, PSP

TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY

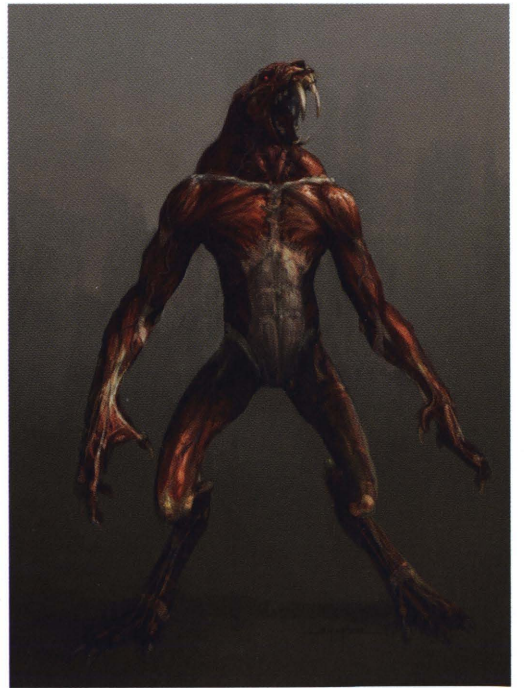


The foundation of Tomb Raider

"As with any franchise there are certain 'rules' that define the boundaries of the *Tomb Raider* universe. Many of these rules come from the definition of Lara Croft as a character herself. Lara's personality, motivations, background, occupation and relationships all help to provide a canvas from which the artistic decisions and style are derived from. The art style is a mix of mythical fantasy firmly grounded within historical and archeological believability. This inspiration gives the art style a foundation for the environment and character direction and helps to provide a basis for the game universe."

Darrell Gallagher

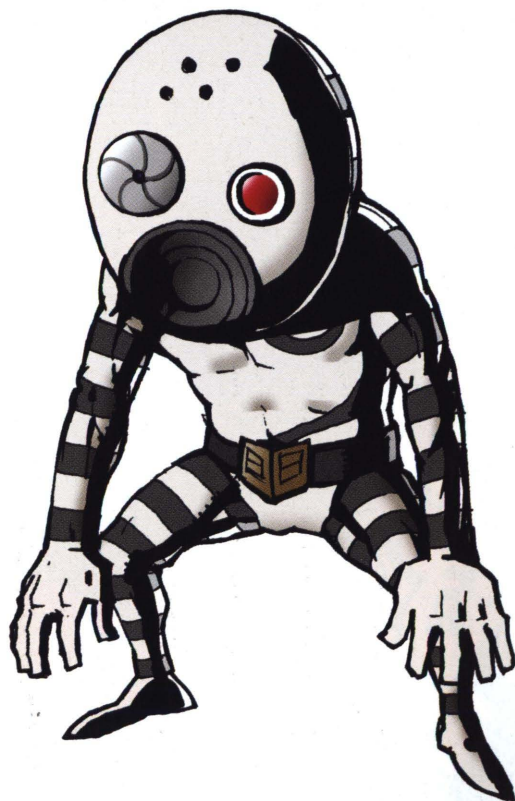






PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (PRODUCTION STUDIO 4) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: GC, PS2

VIEWTIFUL JOE







DA
H.W.
GUY



Inspiration

"To both complement *Team Fortress 2*'s exaggerated gameplay and differentiate ourselves from the modern photorealistic look of most other multiplayer action games, we chose to employ an art style inspired by early- to mid-20th-century commercial illustration alongside 1960s industrial design elements. Specifically, we drew inspiration from the styles of commercial illustrators such as JC Leyendecker, Dean Cornwell and Norman Rockwell. These artists were known for illustrating characters using strong, distinctive silhouettes with emphasis on clothing folds, and they tended to use shading techniques which accentuated the internal shape of objects and characters while emphasising silhouettes with rim highlights rather than dark outlines.

The nine character classes of *Team Fortress 2* were designed to be visually distinct from one another. Even when viewed only in silhouette with no internal shading at all, the characters needed to be readily identifiable to players.

For the elements of the world associated with each of the two teams, blue and red, we defined specific contrasting properties to set them apart. While the red team's base tends to use

warm colours, wooden materials and angular geometry, the blue team's base is composed of cool colours, industrial materials and orthogonal forms.

We also deliberately avoided modelling the world in an overly complex or geometrically off-kilter manner, as this would add an unnecessary level of visual noise – not to mention memory-hungry vertices – to the scene. We found that keeping repetitive structures such as the bridge trusses, telephone poles or railroad ties to a minimum is preferable for our style, as conveying the impression of repetition in the space is more important than representing every detail explicitly.

In general, the texture maps used on the 3D world are impressionistic, meaning that they are painterly and maintain a minimum level of visual noise. This is consistent with the style of painting used on background plates in many animated films, particularly those of Hayao Miyazaki, in which broad brush strokes appear in perspective as if present in the 3D world rather than on the 2D image plane. Miyazaki also influenced the game's world and character colour palette."

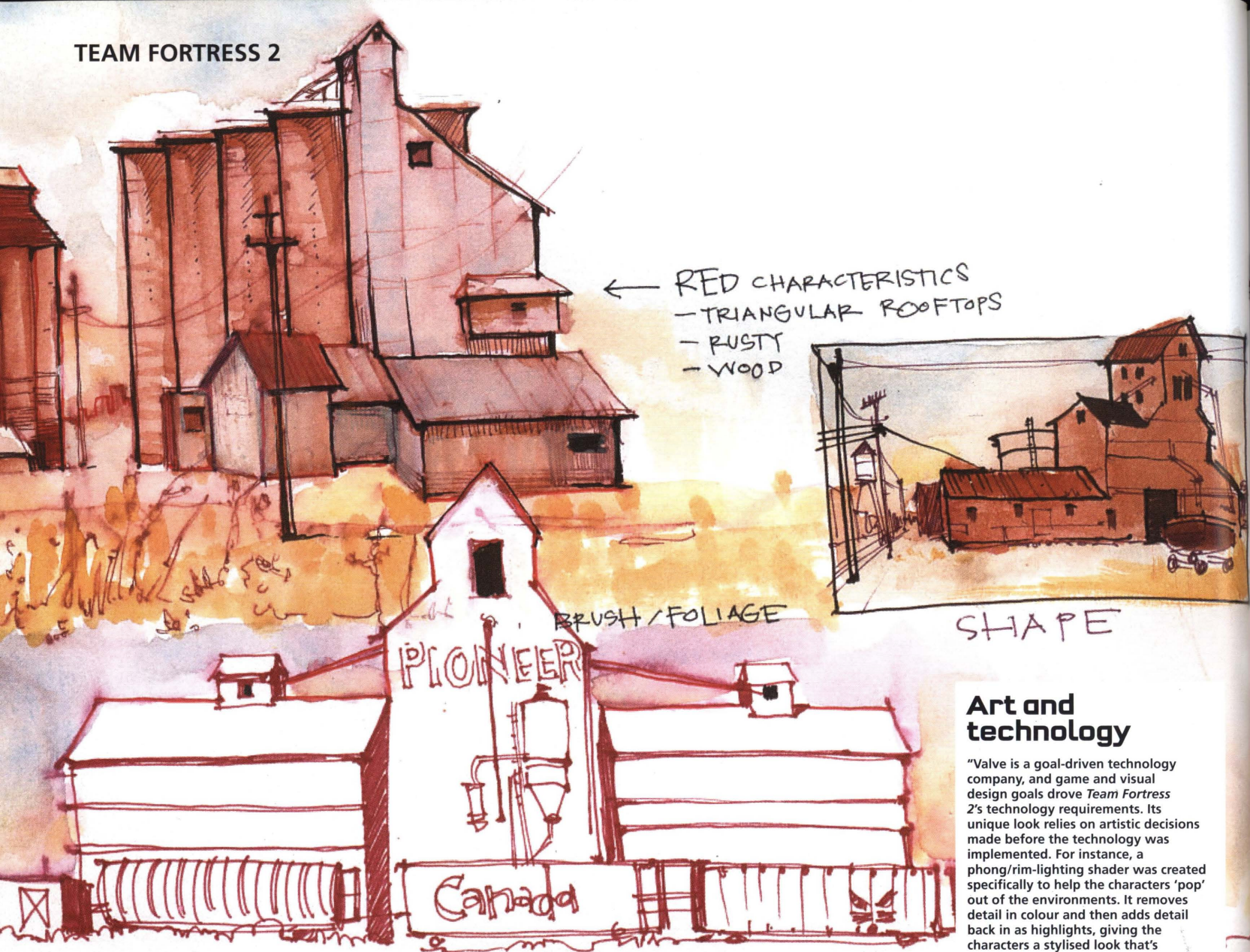
Charlie Brown, project lead



PUBLISHER: VALVE SOFTWARE DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC, PS3

TEAM FORTRESS 2





Art and technology

"Valve is a goal-driven technology company, and game and visual design goals drove *Team Fortress 2*'s technology requirements. Its unique look relies on artistic decisions made before the technology was implemented. For instance, a phong/rim-lighting shader was created specifically to help the characters 'pop' out of the environments. It removes detail in colour and then adds detail back in as highlights, giving the characters a stylised look that's simple yet sophisticated."

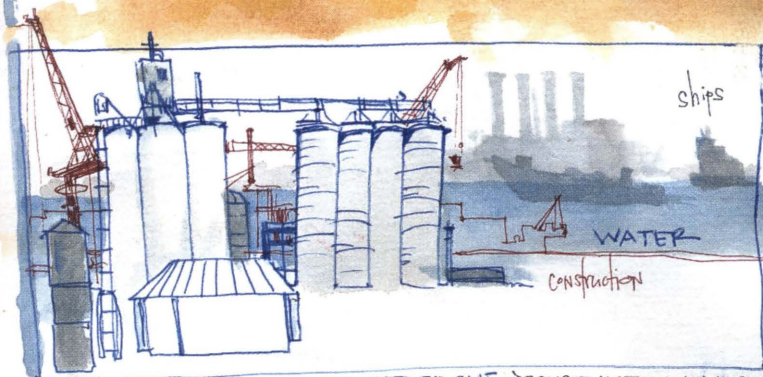
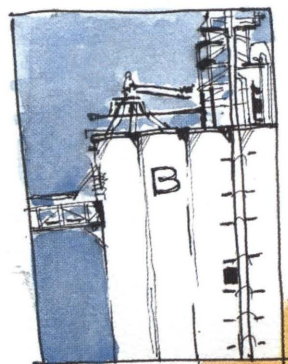
Charlie Brown



BLU SIDE

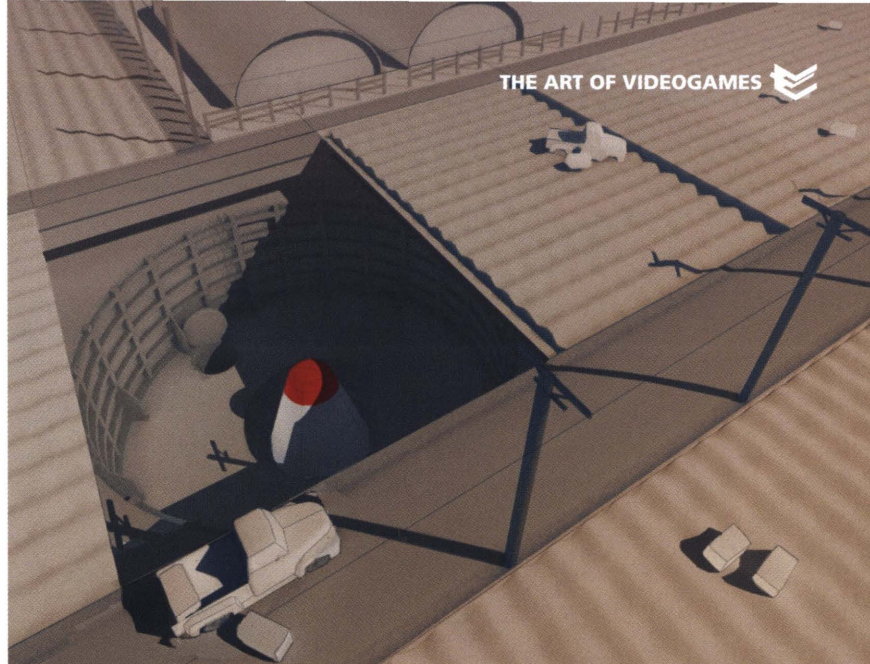
BLU CHARACTERISTICS

- INDUSTRIAL
- STEEL
- COOL COLORS



BLU SIDE ON WATERFRONT → CONSTRUCTION IN DISTA

THE ART OF VIDEOGAMES



Bold outlines

"The specific characteristics we needed to capture were mostly dictated by *Team Fortress 2*'s gameplay. Foremost, we wanted players to be able to intuit each character's unique gameplay features at a glance. The Heavy Weapons character, for example, had to quickly convey strength, sturdiness, slowness, and the ability to pack a real wallop. To further aid in quick readability, each character class required a bold, distinct silhouette shape."

Charlie Brown



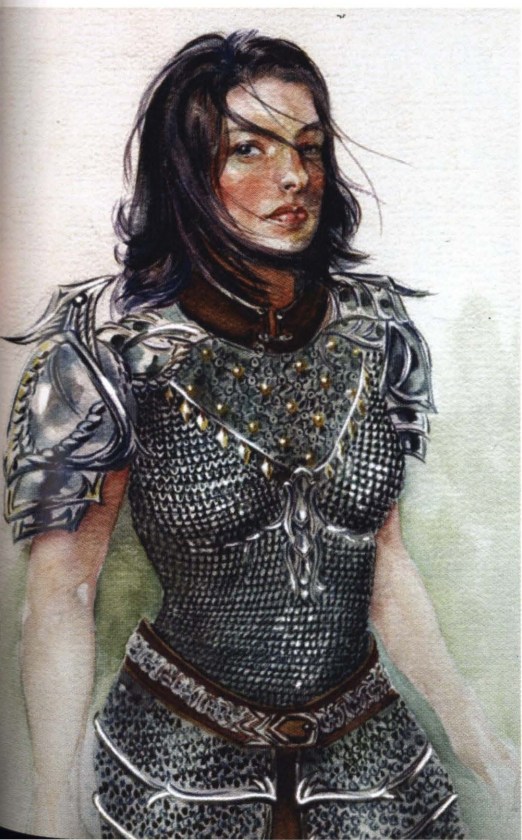


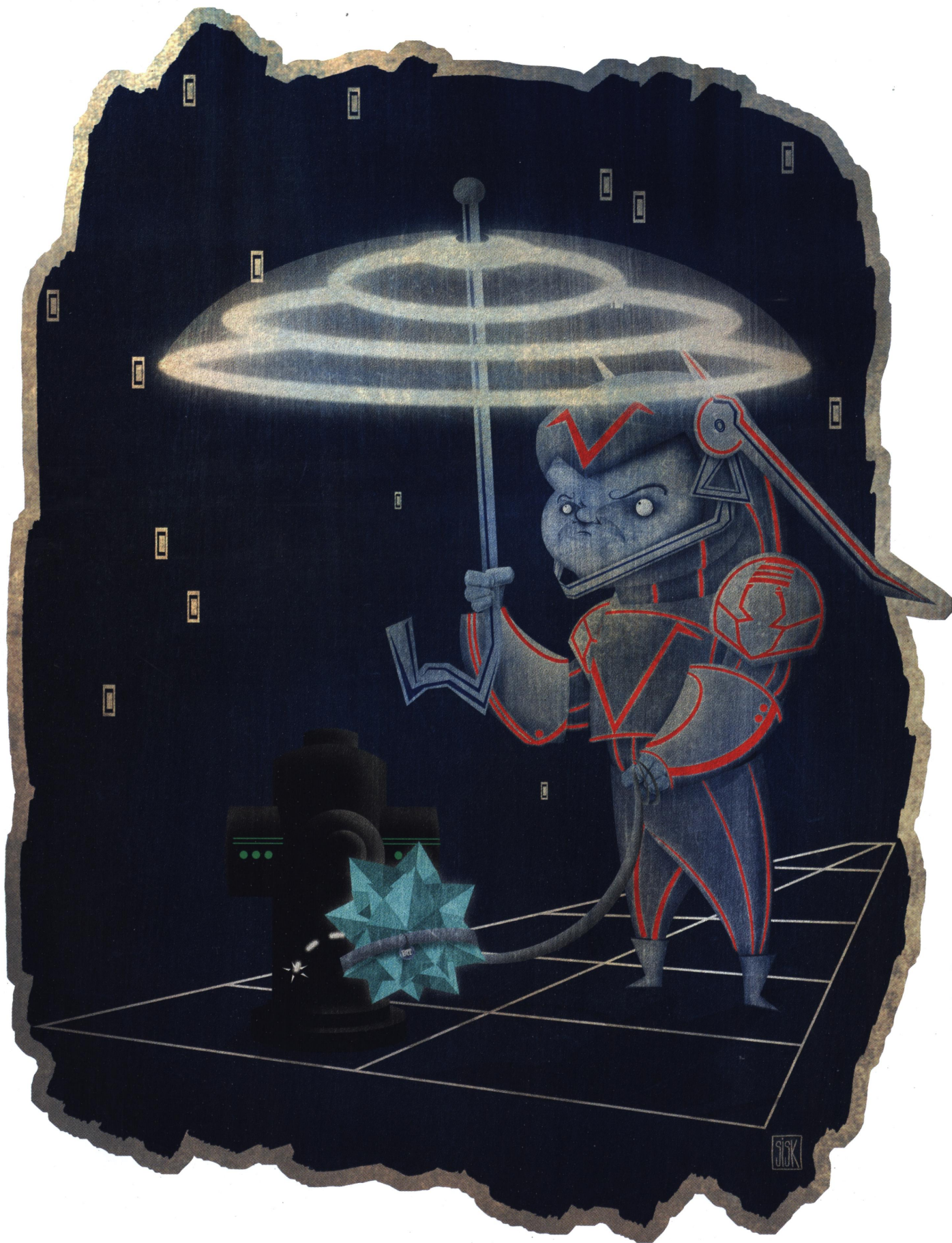
PUBLISHER: TAKE TWO/UBISOFT DEVELOPER: BETHESDA RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: 360, PC, PS3

THE ELDER SCROLLS: OBLIVION













APPROVED FOR TRANSPORT
UNDER CUSTOMS S.
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PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: **IN-HOUSE/RED STORM** RELEASE: **2006** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER









Inspiration

"We thought for a long time about what place could accommodate our racing game. We needed somewhere where the boundaries were natural, so the player retained a sense of liberty, avoiding invisible collisions and other unwelcome objects blocking the way. After a great deal of research we focused on one island, Oahu, the largest in the Hawaiian archipelago with a surface area of 1,555km² (64km wide and 42km long) and a comprehensive road network. In short, an immense gameplay area. With its coconut palms and golden beaches, this island paradise could certainly accommodate *Test Drive Unlimited*. The graphics work started with photography so we could visualise the things we wanted. By using a camera mounted on the bonnet of the car, we were able to capture every road on the island. Digital photography was the primary source material for the realisation of all the in-game textures allowing us to keep a perfect level of realism in the game."

Benoit Boucher, art director





PUBLISHER: **ATARI** DEVELOPER: **EDEN GAMES** RELEASE: **VARIOUS** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED





Art and technology

"We used HDRI (High Dynamic Range Image) to simulate natural and realistic lighting. The eye is more sensitive to the relative level of intensity rather than the absolute. This effect lets us achieve natural lighting effects on the vehicles and decorative elements, reinforcing the game ambience.

In a next-gen game the highlighting of details is important. Any of the elements could find themselves the main focus of attention in a game that happens in real time. The texture of a wall, for example, could find itself right in front of the camera. This is why we need the maximum of detail in the textures with

a consistently high pixel ratio.

Normal maps were very useful – used in combination with the lighting the technique is applicable on different textures, giving more depth to the texture. The eye perceives variations in lighting and interprets them following the angle of reflection to deduce the depth.

So normal maps use a trick to generate lighting effects to simulate natural lighting and produce the same effect as in reality so we perceive better 3D textures. Principally it's the interplay of the shadows and the lights which make normal maps useful."

Benoit Boucher



Post-production

"As in the world of cinematography, we use post-production effects, meaning a supplementary layer which adds a visual treatment to the game image. Playing with the colour balance and filters lets us generate a completely different feeling and ambience. For example, tinting the image with bluish tones creates a coldness which can reflect an insecurity or uneasiness, or could also give a sense of seriousness when done in a certain style. On the other hand, using warm and colourful tones brings a sense of well-being and equilibrium to the game. The brightness has its role to play – playing with the contrast to over-accentuate the white tones lets us saturate everything while preserving the ambience.

The camera movements and blur effects are widely used in next-gen games to give a feeling of speed or rapid movement. What is unique about this effect is that it is lively and dynamic and lets the player have a greater immersion in the game.

Thanks to these effects, the final rendering has a signature, a finishing touch which gives the game visuals a strong identity and something unique which sets them apart from the competition."

Benoit Boucher

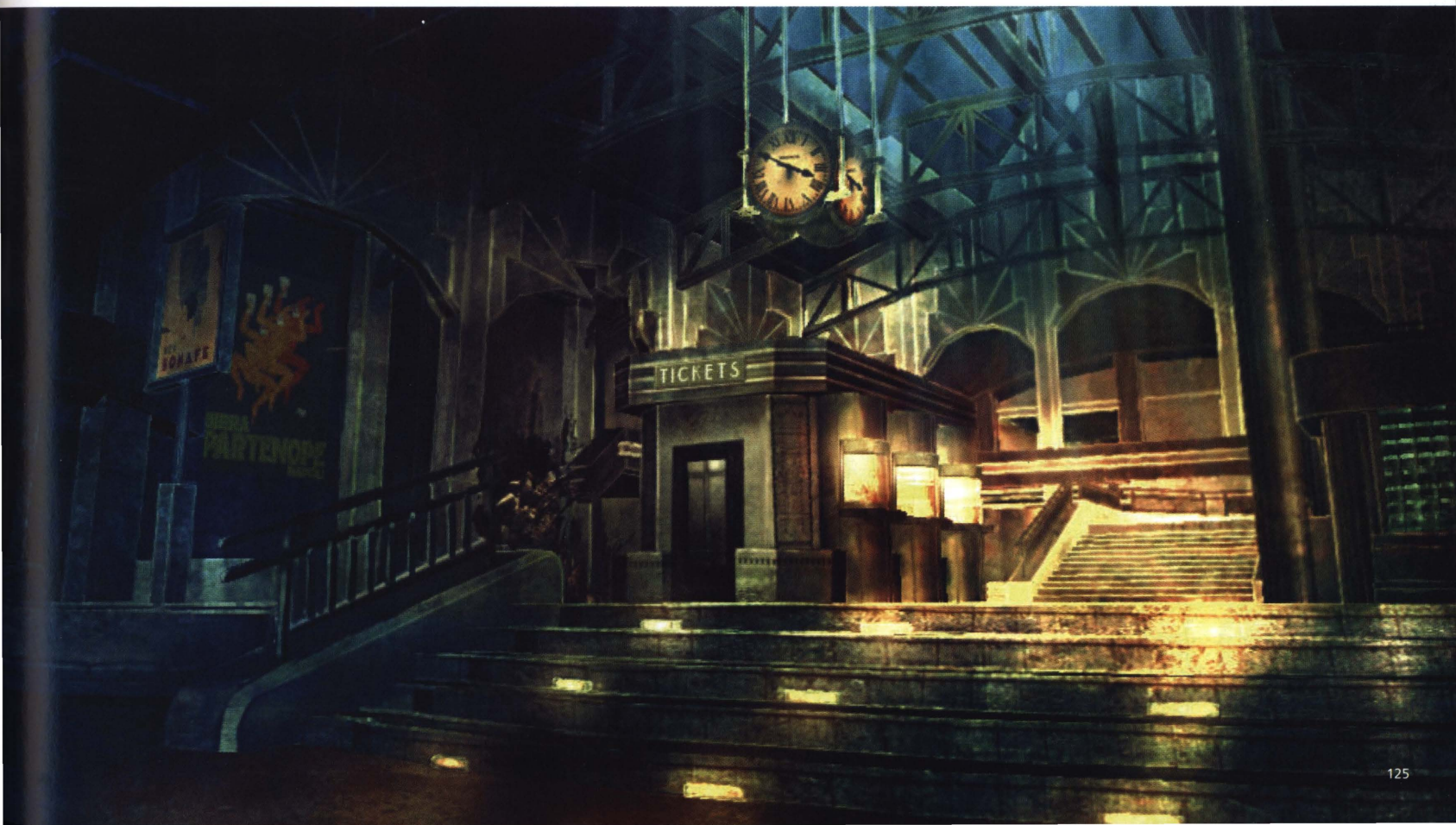


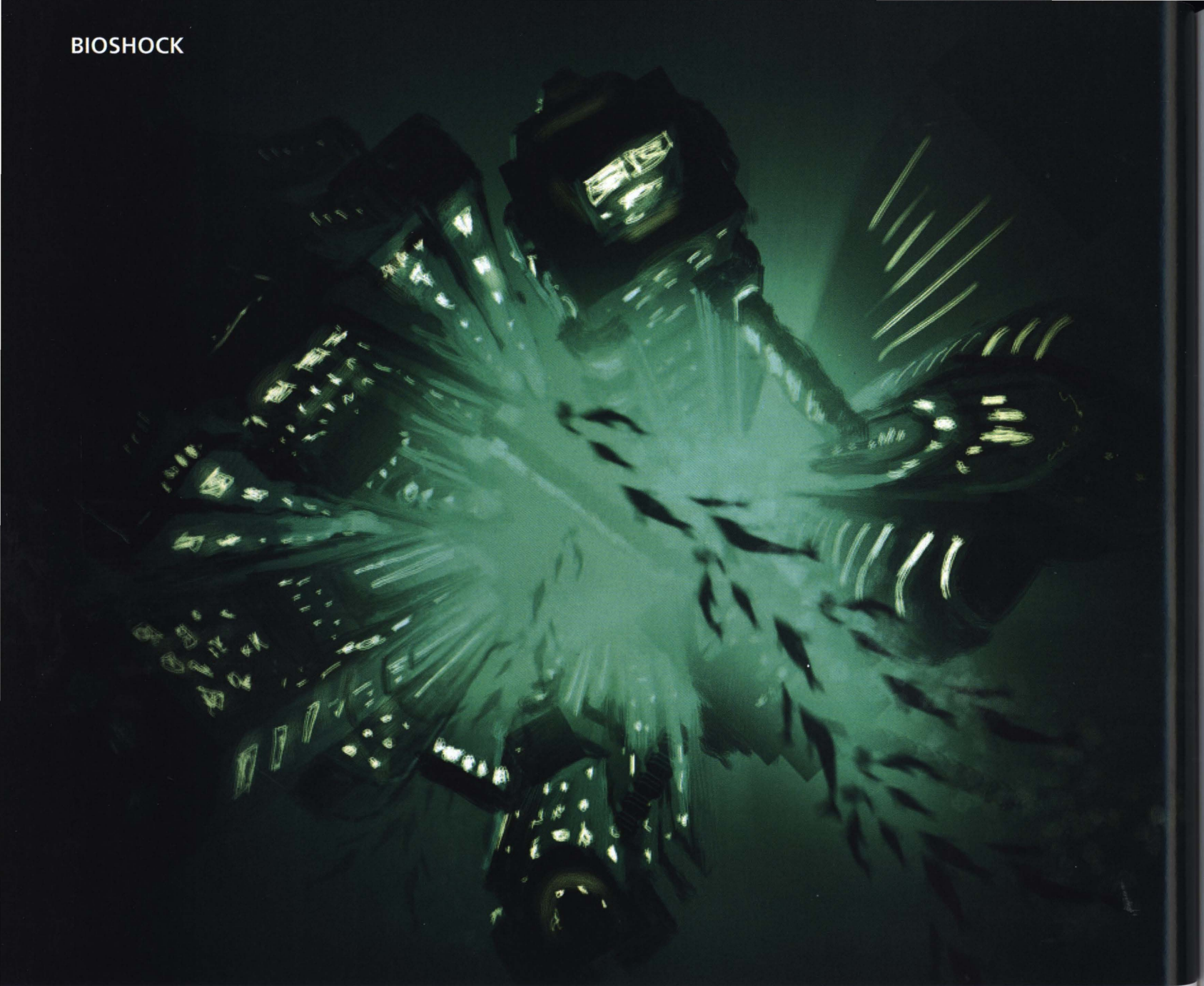


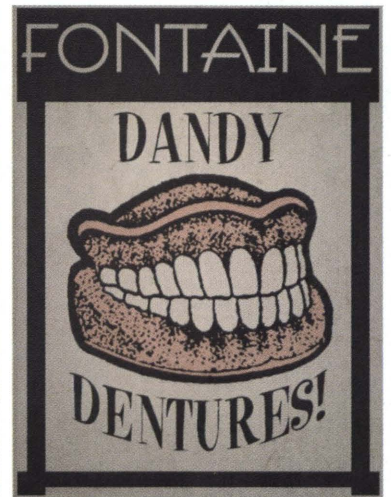
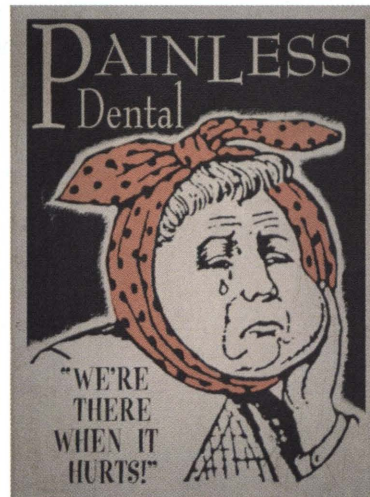
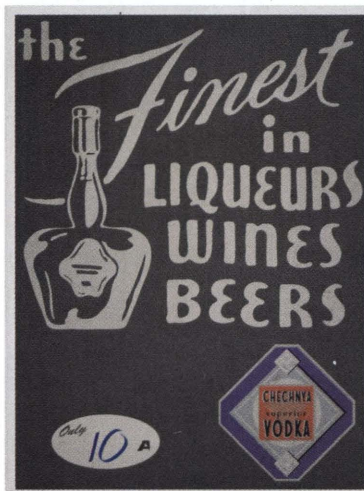
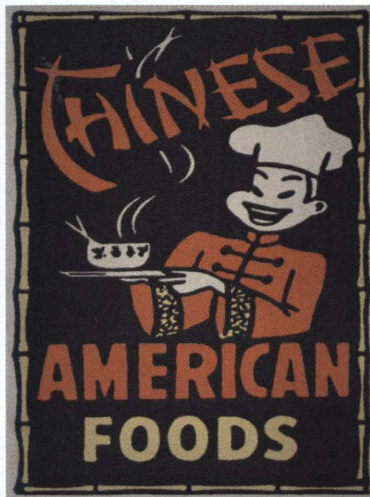
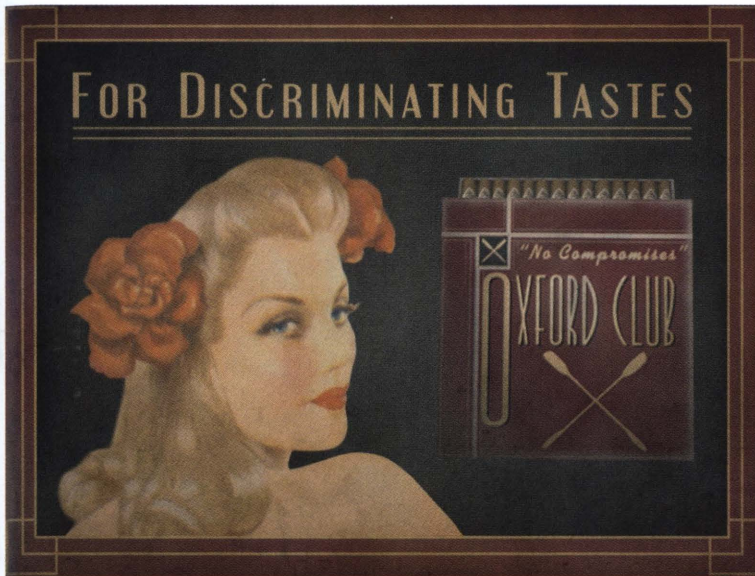


PUBLISHER: TAKE TWO DEVELOPER: IRRATIONAL GAMES RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC

BIOSHOCK









PUBLISHER: SCEE DEVELOPER: NINJA THEORY RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PS3

HEAVENLY SWORD



Inspiration

"*Heavenly Sword* was originally conceived as an epic adventure story and we wanted it to be presented in the most cinematic way possible, so obviously movies were a big inspiration for us. Recent films such as *Hero* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* not only inspired our exciting combat system, but also made us want to create those kind of beautiful, rich environments. We also drew inspiration from the fantasy themes of epics such as *The Lord Of The Rings* but still wanted to keep everything grounded in reality – albeit a stunningly gorgeous reality. The *Heavenly Sword* world soon developed its own identity and style to become the uniquely beautiful mix it is today. Just take a look at screenshots and you'll see what we mean."

Alessandro 'Talexi' Taini,
senior concept art ninja





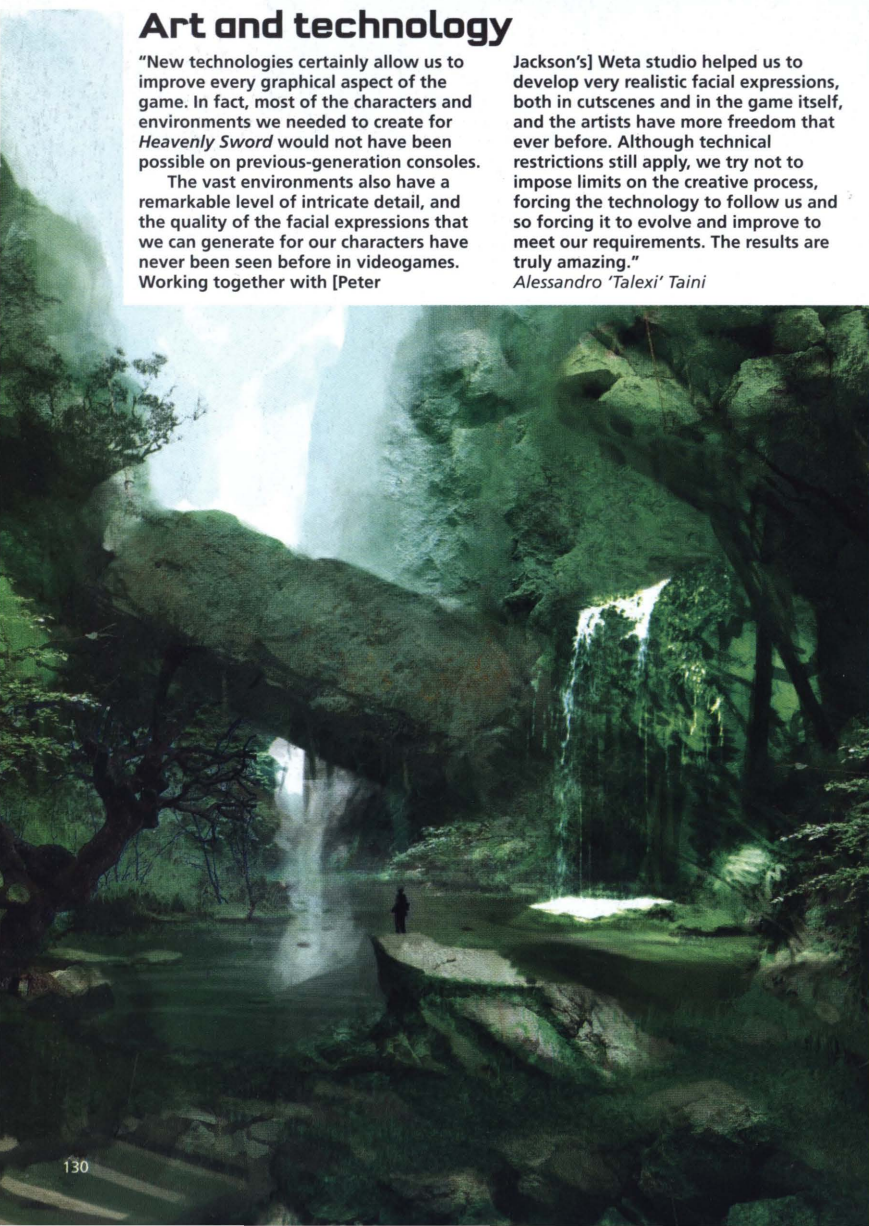
Art and technology

"New technologies certainly allow us to improve every graphical aspect of the game. In fact, most of the characters and environments we needed to create for *Heavenly Sword* would not have been possible on previous-generation consoles.

The vast environments also have a remarkable level of intricate detail, and the quality of the facial expressions that we can generate for our characters have never been seen before in videogames. Working together with [Peter

Jackson's] Weta studio helped us to develop very realistic facial expressions, both in cutscenes and in the game itself, and the artists have more freedom than ever before. Although technical restrictions still apply, we try not to impose limits on the creative process, forcing the technology to follow us and so forcing it to evolve and improve to meet our requirements. The results are truly amazing."

Alessandro 'Talexi' Taini







Creating memorable characters

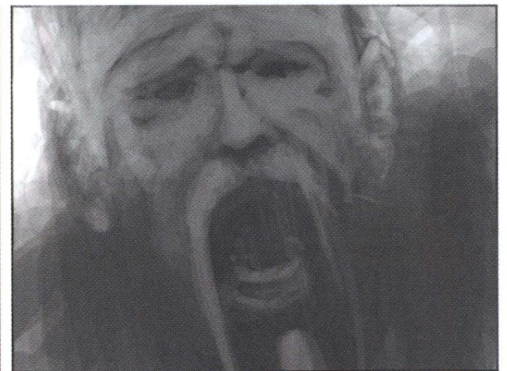
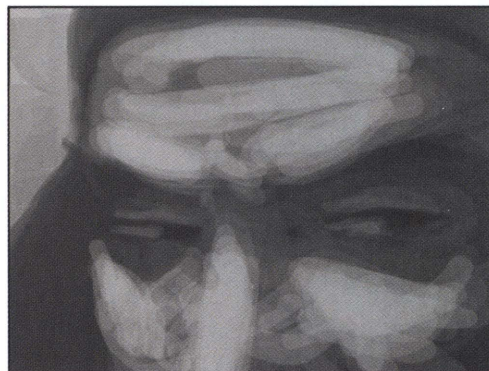
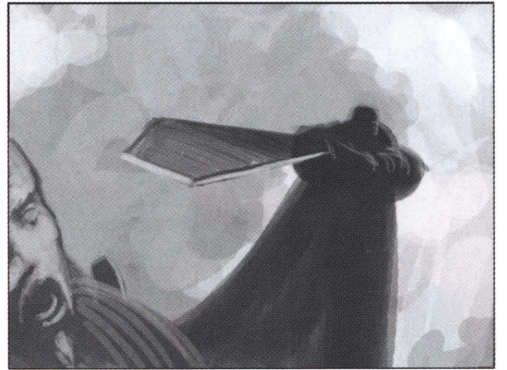
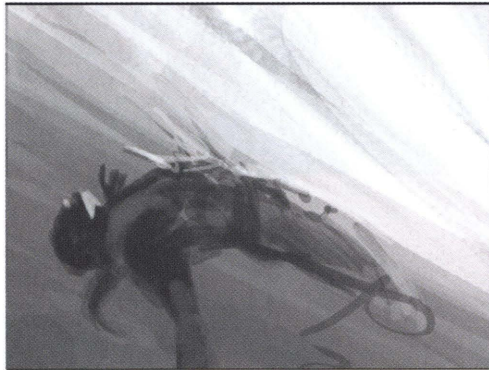
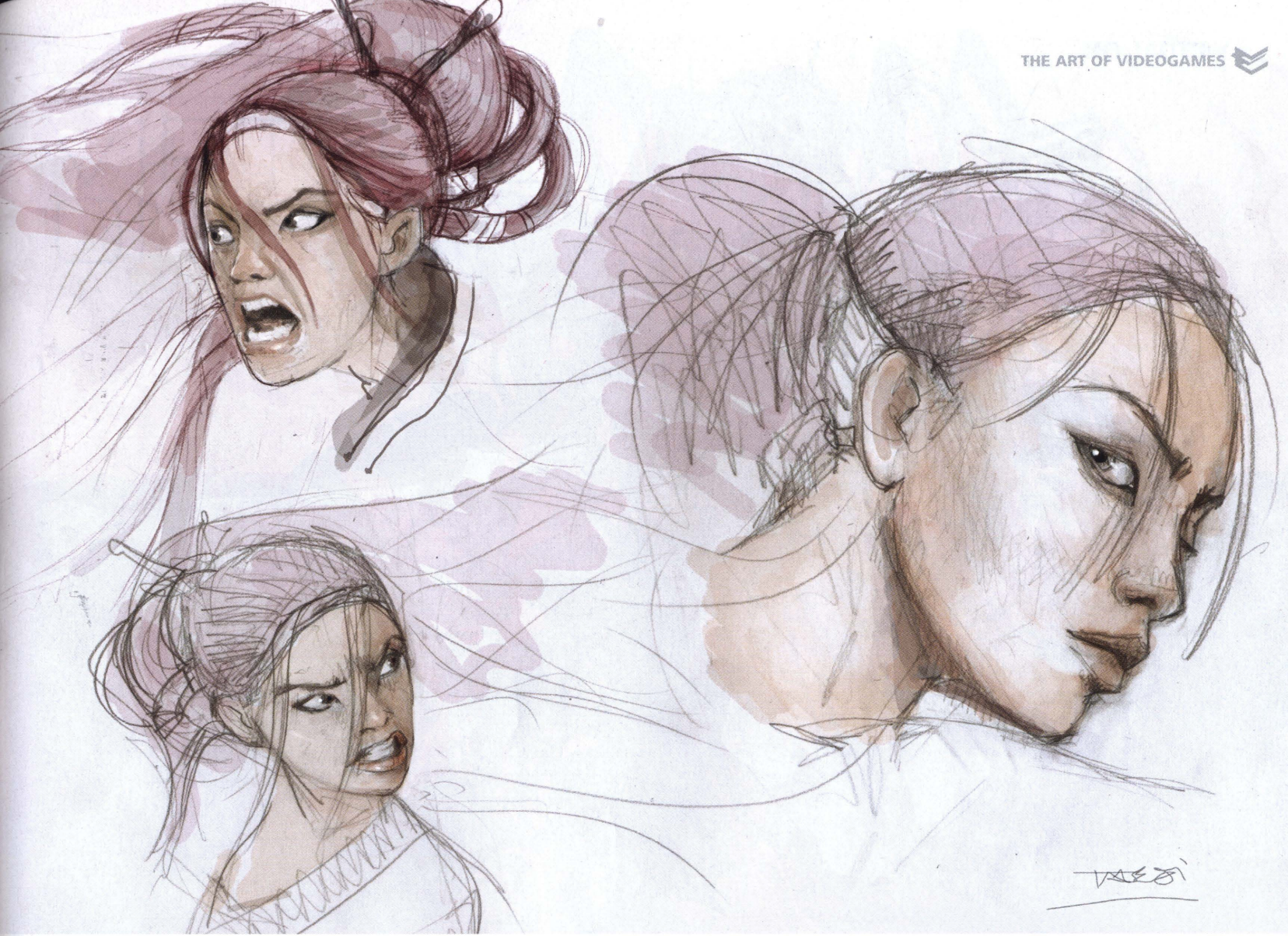
"As with so many things, the key is simplicity. If you can create a strong focus for game characters then it is much easier for people to recognise and identify with them. Obviously all the elements of the design have to fit in and make sense, but having a single key focus point creates a very strong and powerful character. The focus point can be physical – a particular

shape that stands out, a special colour tone or a particular costume – or it can be the animation, creating a character based on a specific movement set. Nariko is a perfect example of this. She has the long, flowing red hair that instantly sets her apart, and her simple costume design makes the hair stand out even more."

Alessandro 'Talexi' Taini









PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (AM3) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: COIN-OP, DC

VIRTUAL ON







Finding balance

"There is a fine balance between familiarity and uniqueness that makes a design memorable. What I mean by familiarity is all that you can learn from what has been done before, so as not to reinvent the wheel. As for uniqueness and originality, this is where it's trickier because to be totally honest there isn't a formula for it, and what works for an artist might not do for another.

But in my personal experience what helps me achieve artwork that has its own distinctive feel is a combination of things:

1. Good briefs and inspirations.
2. Not being scared to be bold and bending the rules and conventions – so long as it's not for the sake of it.
3. Tailoring the visual solutions to the needs and functionalities of a project, because this helps to make the work less generic.
4. Knowing how to integrate input and feedback in the artwork, without making it design by committee.
5. Being prolific – I always draw and paint in and outside of work. This really helps release lots of ideas and makes me less anxious when I have a specific task. And of course it's good practice as well."

Kareem Ettouney, previously at Lionhead, now at Media Molecule

PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: LIONHEAD RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: MAC, PC

BLACK & WHITE (SERIES)





Character creation

"Designing appealing characters is a very challenging task, as gamers' tastes vary. Here are some of the things that definitely make a character stand out:

1. Having an iconic silhouette that is recognisable and can be readable in various sizes.
2. Good character design has to always consider how it will move and interact in the game, and how it will be viewed on screen, as it is very common that you see an artist doing an elaborate, detailed character that ends up occupying 10cm on the screen, or putting lots of distinctive features on the face of a character that is only seen from the back, or making dimensions and proportions that clash with the animations.
3. Less is more. It's always good to eliminate any visual clutter that doesn't really add to the character.
4. It's good to design a character that

people can draw in a few lines and instantly recognise.

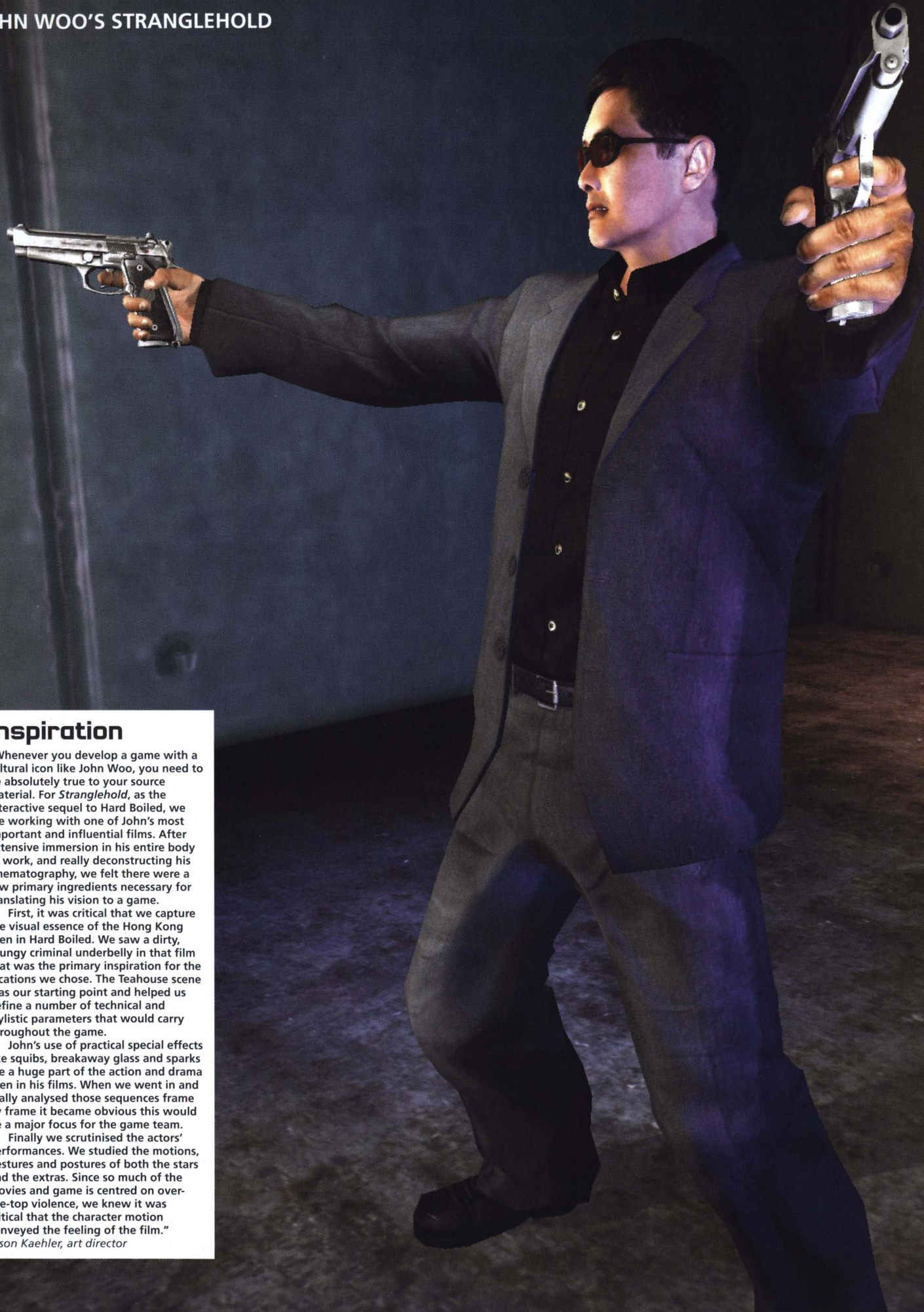
5. Having a good knowledge of human and animal anatomy is very useful for character design, even if the character is highly stylised, as this helps its proportions, dynamics and emoting aspects.
6. Regarding costumes, I think it's really important to have a broader range of inspirations so as to make use of the wealth of fashion and history of costume out there.
7. When doing mechanical designs – robots, etc – it's good to have some industrial design knowledge so the design will look believable and not just made up.

Ultimately I look to create characters that are bold, iconic and functional, with lots of personality."

Kareem Ettouney







Inspiration

"Whenever you develop a game with a cultural icon like John Woo, you need to be absolutely true to your source material. For *Stranglehold*, as the interactive sequel to *Hard Boiled*, we are working with one of John's most important and influential films. After extensive immersion in his entire body of work, and really deconstructing his cinematography, we felt there were a few primary ingredients necessary for translating his vision to a game.

First, it was critical that we capture the visual essence of the Hong Kong seen in *Hard Boiled*. We saw a dirty, grungy criminal underbelly in that film that was the primary inspiration for the locations we chose. The Teahouse scene was our starting point and helped us define a number of technical and stylistic parameters that would carry throughout the game.

John's use of practical special effects like squibs, breakaway glass and sparks are a huge part of the action and drama seen in his films. When we went in and really analysed those sequences frame by frame it became obvious this would be a major focus for the game team.

Finally we scrutinised the actors' performances. We studied the motions, gestures and postures of both the stars and the extras. Since so much of the movies and game is centred on over-the-top violence, we knew it was critical that the character motion conveyed the feeling of the film."

Jason Kaehler, art director



PUBLISHER: MIDWAY DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (MIDWAY CHICAGO) RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC, PS3

JOHN WOO'S STRANGLEHOLD







The John Woo connection

"Having John involved was fantastic. It's rare with licensed products that a development team can work directly with the creative visionary behind the intellectual property. Because he and his production company are working directly with us, we can throw ideas at them and see how John would handle something.

We listen closely and follow the ethos established in his films. Everything we have done in this product has been to further the goal of putting you inside a

John Woo film and making you feel like a complete badass.

Even the game design supports this – for example, by doing complicated moves, like swinging from a chandelier while blasting guys, you earn extra points that then allow you to do further cinematic actions. This mechanism rewards the player for engaging the game world in a 'John Woo-like' manner, therefore reinforcing the visuals."

Jason Kaehler





Keeping it real

"[Using a real actor's likeness in the game is] extremely difficult because a superstar like Chow Yun Fat is recognised by millions of people all over the world. He also has a long career spanning a few decades, so there are many 'faces' of Chow. Keith Beu, the artist who modelled Tequila [the character played by Chow Yun Fat], was presented with a very interesting challenge.

First, we gathered as much reference footage and imagery as we could. Then we went to Hong Kong to scan Chow Yun Fat. Armed with as much source material as we could possibly get, we set upon the enormous artistic challenge to capture his

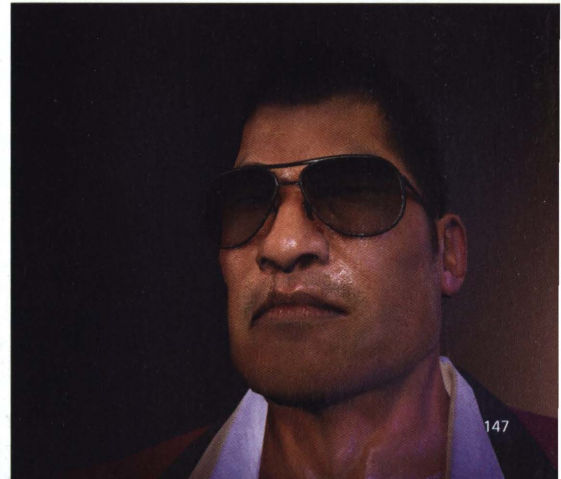
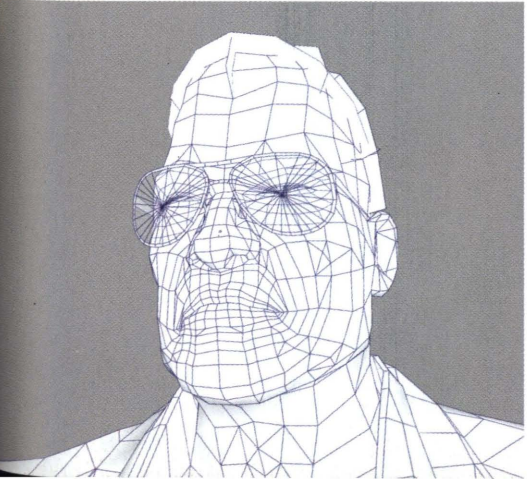
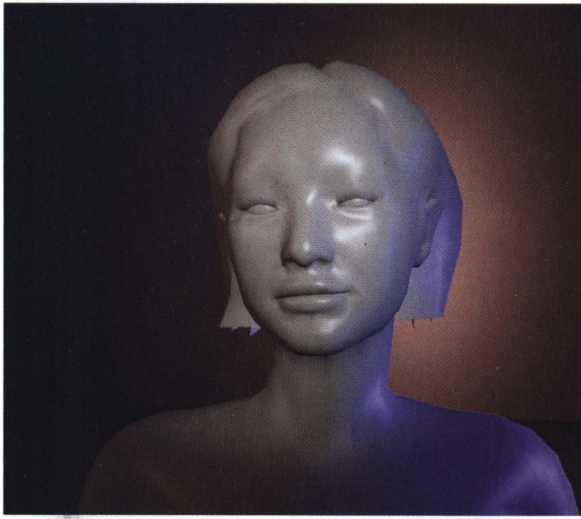
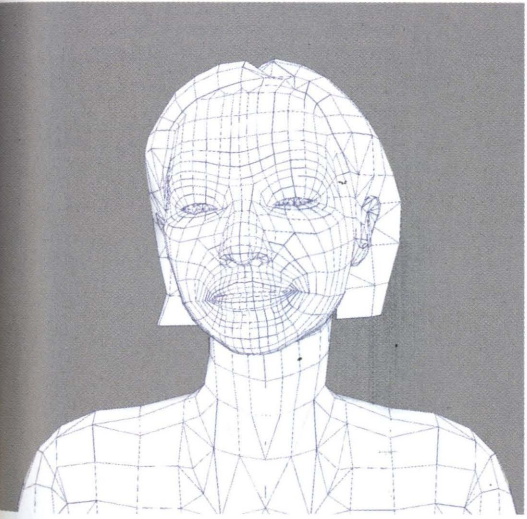
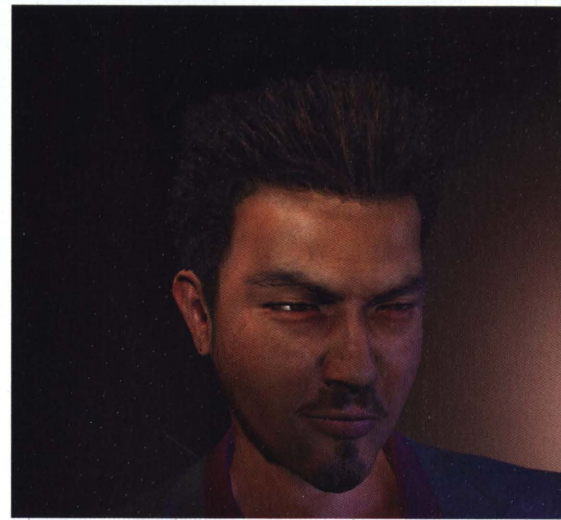
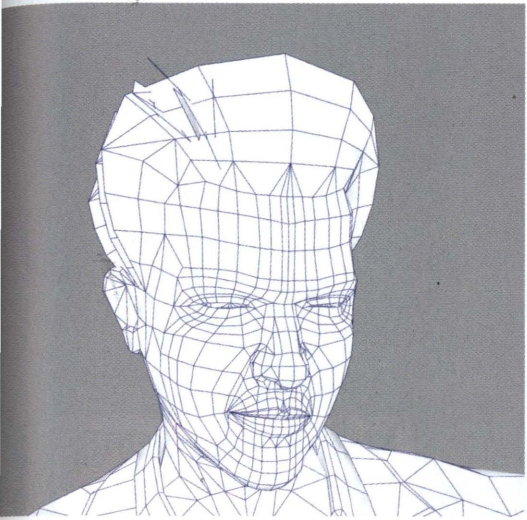
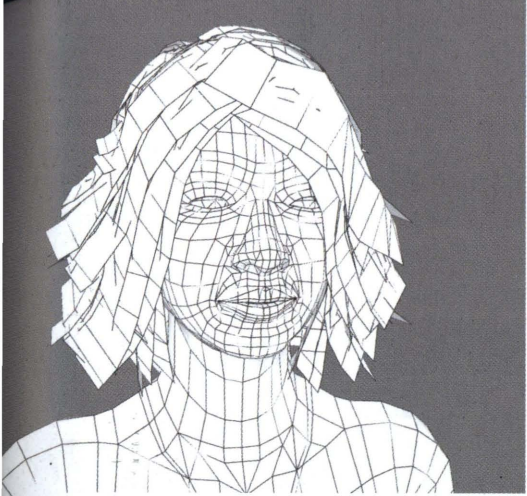
likeness and modify it appropriately for the chronology of the story.

Once we had a Chow Yun Fat model we liked, we knew it would be equally important to create menacing bad guys. Our concept art department provided 'photo-collage' faces and outfits for the various roles the script required.

We spent months in preproduction getting these characters 'just right'. After going through various approval stages, these characters also went into production using similar techniques to the Chow Yun Fat production process, albeit without scan data."

Jason Kaehler







The race towards photorealism

"We're getting pretty close to photorealism now. More power from the graphics hardware will be the key.

F1 Championship Edition relies on shaders comprised of bitmap textures, and when we start to fully exploit the

power of the PlayStation 3 hardware we'll be able to support more complex pixel shaders and will start to see the likes of properly realised grass – literally every blade."

Neil Thompson, lead artist

Modelling racing hardware

"We have detailed reference photography of all aspects of the team hardware: cars, team garages, right down to the tools used in the pit lane, which are all team branded.

Additionally, some of the teams have sent us car blueprints as well as branding documentation and sponsor logos. Since all team-related assets are signed off by the teams themselves, it's a matter of pride for us to recreate them as accurately as possible."

Neil Thompson



Art and technology

"The flexibility of the shader architecture of the RSX, as well as the programmability of SPU's, allows us to give the artists tools to realise their vision. More and more, we are able to embed functionality into Maya which comes through directly into the game

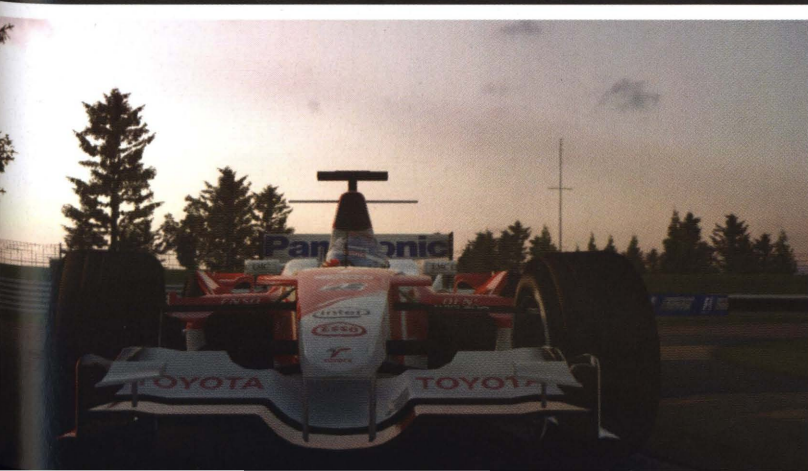
engine, making for faster turnaround and hence more dynamic and better results. In addition, the capacity of the Blu-ray storage format means we can worry less about compressing assets and more on quality."

Neil Thompson



PUBLISHER: SCEE DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (STUDIO LIVERPOOL) RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PS3

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION











PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: 360

DEAD RISING









The Halo universe as a cohesive whole

"*Halo* is all about iconic representation times a thousand.

Human military vehicles, weapons, and spaceships are all easily and quickly identifiable in their most iconic form. The Warthog reminds you of a contemporary all-terrain vehicle and its green colour reminds you that it is military but it's got gigantic wheels and a sleek futuristic profile.

By combining those elements you get something that is quickly recognisable as a car, as military, and as a badass

futuristic car. The same goes for everything in *Halo*.

Massive buried structures remind you that you are exploring something ancient and alien but it is buried beneath an alpine meadow, or an ocean cliff; an ocean cliff that a player can relate to as something on Earth but we make it a thousand feet high and craggy with rolling mist and birds and a giant planet hovering above you and purple ferns and space crates. Lots of space crates."

Christopher Barrett, art lead

"The different races in *Halo* allows us to set pretty strict rules for art and design aesthetics. The obvious ones are for the Covenant: curvy and shiny; Human: utilitarian and boxy; Forerunner: futuristic minimalism and hard angles. These are the basis for the rules we have, and generally are reinforced with the type of gameplay that happens. Whatever the distinctions are should complement the gameplay – it helps sell the universe as a cohesive whole. Ensuring a consistency on this game is a challenge, and definitely not

easy. We've got a great staff that includes a bunch of artists that have been here from *Halo 1* and *2*, and they usually are the ones that make sure the design aesthetics get passed through and remain the same. We've got style and design bibles that we use, consisting of concepts from previous games to serve as a reminder of what things should look like. All of this helps. And of course periodic art checks are definitely necessary to ensure all is in line."

Shiek Wan, 3D art lead

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: BUNGIE STUDIOS RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: 360, PC, XBOX

HALO (SERIES)



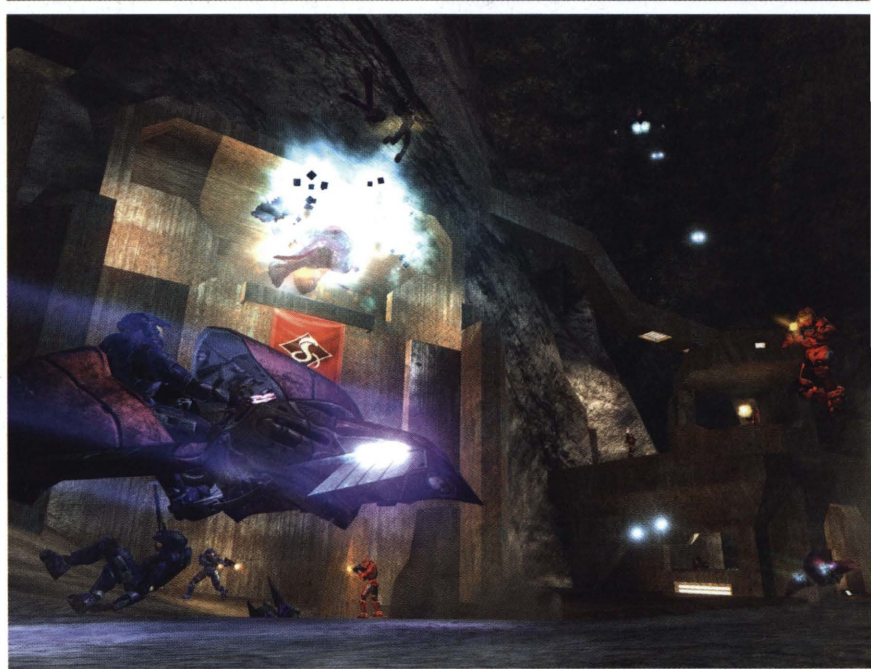
Inspiration

"[My inspirations are] nature, Frank Lloyd Wright, Thundarr the Barbarian, anime, space crates, the grid, Swiss design, beer."

Christopher Barrett



VEPT 'MAD MAX'





Art and technology

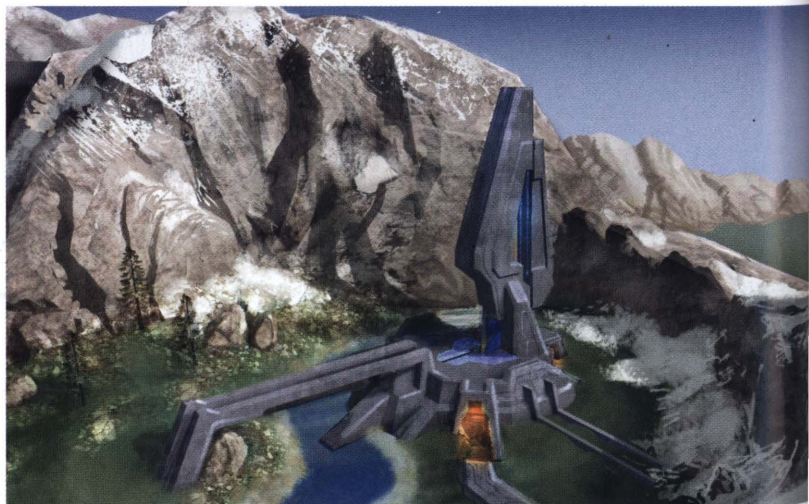
"[An example of technology changing the creative process would be] lighting. I think lighting will always make people jump out and say 'wow!', because it's something everyone knows when it's right and when it's wrong, even if they don't know how to articulate it or put their finger on it. Realistic lighting is great on environments, but might not always be great for gameplay. One challenge that we are evaluating is whether or not we want to shadow players in multiplayer like we do in real life, so that when they're in the dark they are totally obscured by the shadows. From an artistic perspective this is very cool; however, it starts to potentially alter the gameplay mechanics of the *Halo* series. So this sort of decision becomes a fine balance between gameplay design versus visual aesthetics. I think as graphics technology gets better and better, the choices in aesthetics will become a balancing act, but to be able to have that choice is awesome."

Shiek Wang

"The first time you import a 2048x2048 bitmap and the dev lead doesn't physically hurt you... it leaves you with a tingly feeling... and wondering if they'd be OK with a 4096."

Christopher Barrett









Inspiration

"The *Hitman* games have always had the stylistic contrast between the mature and the darkly comical. It's always been a goal to be cinematic, and the games are littered with movie references, some quite obvious ones like Luc Besson's *Leon*, and the *Godfather* series, but many might only be single scenes from a movie that inspired a location or a hit.

Another desire is also to try and push the boundaries of what's acceptable. Both content-wise and visually, we always try to challenge each other to make it more extreme, more eccentric or just plain different from other games.

I believe that the humoristic elements in the games have evolved because over time the team got tired of being too pretentious about the work; after all, it's a game, and a game is supposed to be entertaining, so all these little – more or less – subtle jokes snuck into the game, to become an integral part of the style."

Tore Blystad, art director

PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: VARIOUS

HITMAN (SERIES)







The supporting cast

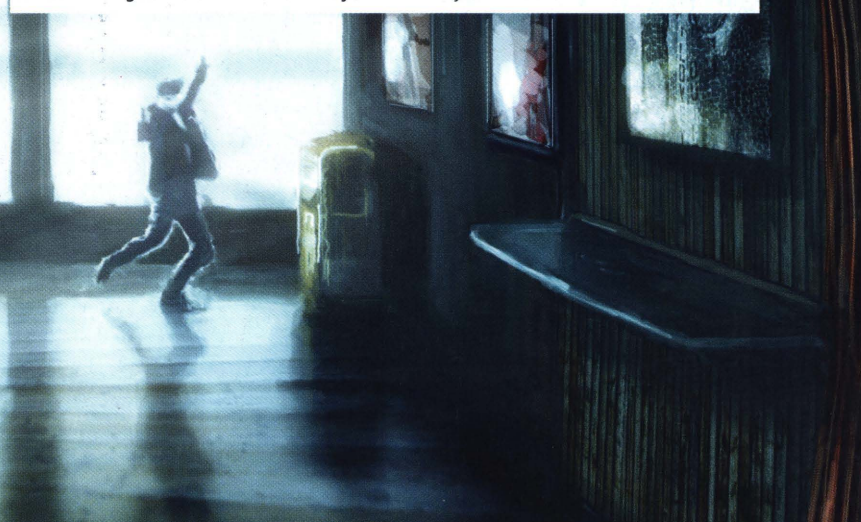
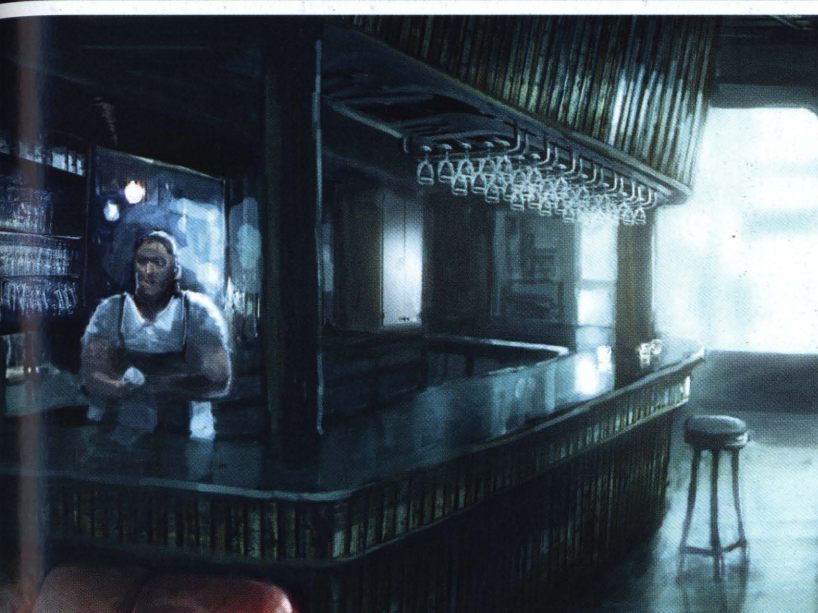
"It's always a big technical challenge to create the vast numbers of characters for the levels, mostly because of memory issues. Special 'character construction kits' were developed to facilitate this in *Blood Money*, but there's a lot of hard work behind the cast, and there are always a lot of characters we eventually have to cut from the levels.

Often, the game design starts with creating an interesting target and then building the level to fit that target's personality. Our biggest regret is that since the targets are often hidden away

somewhere on the level, the player rarely gets to spend a lot of time with them. So the solution to this is we also have to spend a lot of effort on the supporting cast to compensate.

I think when it comes to what gamers want, we mostly try to satisfy our own curiosity with our characters, then hope that the players are going to like the same as us. But there are times we have been told to moderate the cast because we went too far and made them too extreme."

Tore Blystad



The Hitman mood

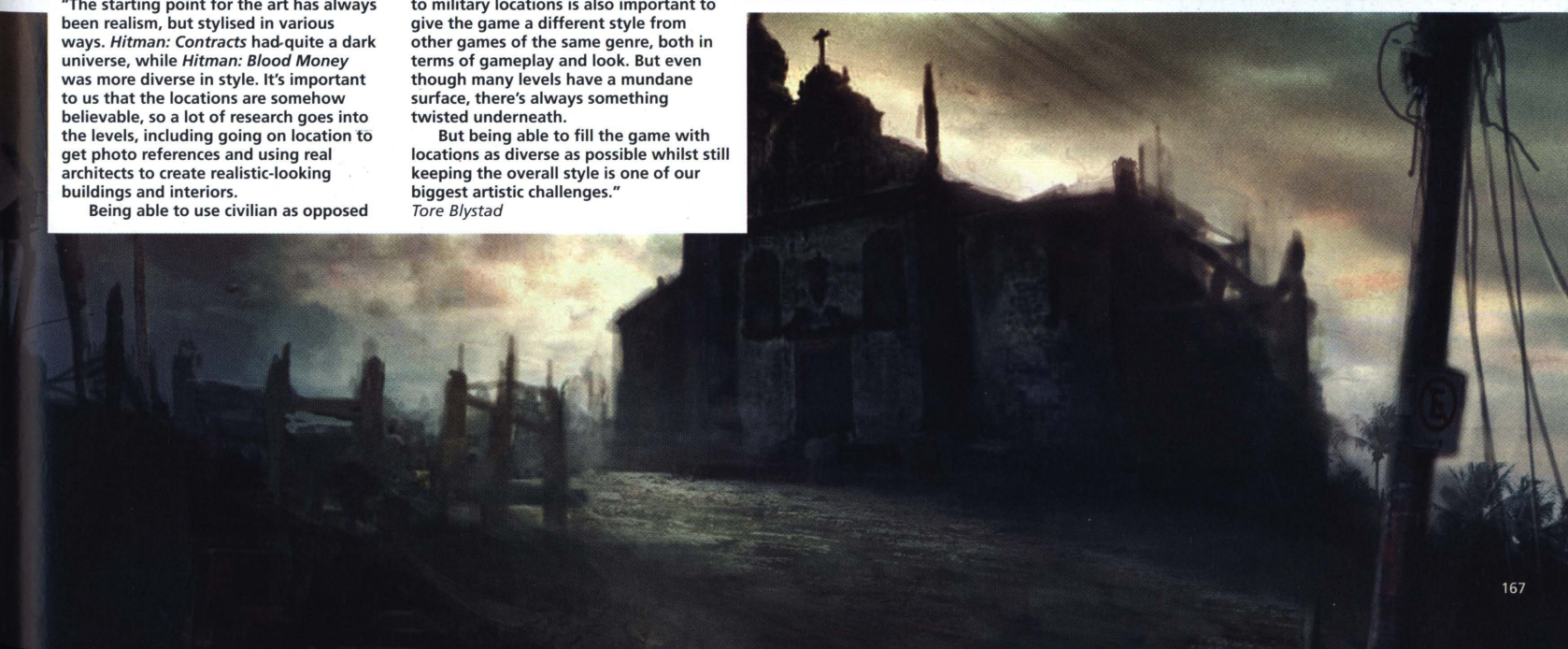
"The starting point for the art has always been realism, but stylised in various ways. *Hitman: Contracts* had quite a dark universe, while *Hitman: Blood Money* was more diverse in style. It's important to us that the locations are somehow believable, so a lot of research goes into the levels, including going on location to get photo references and using real architects to create realistic-looking buildings and interiors.

Being able to use civilian as opposed

to military locations is also important to give the game a different style from other games of the same genre, both in terms of gameplay and look. But even though many levels have a mundane surface, there's always something twisted underneath.

But being able to fill the game with locations as diverse as possible whilst still keeping the overall style is one of our biggest artistic challenges."

Tore Blystad

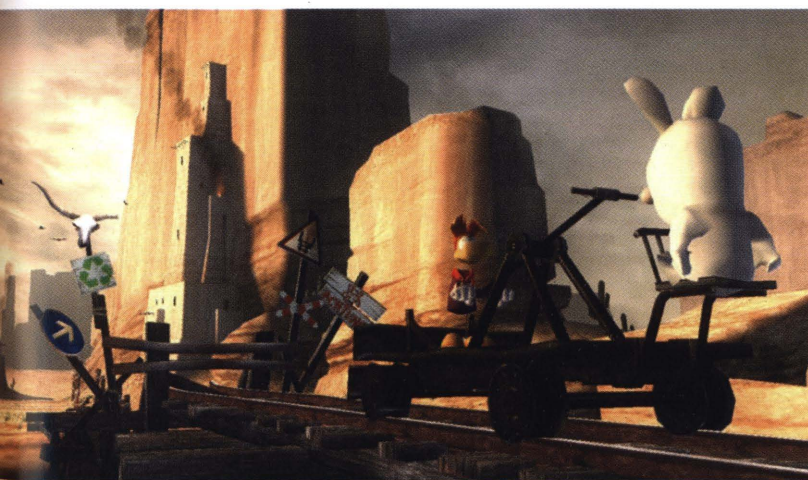






PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: **IN-HOUSE** RELEASE: **2006** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

RAYMAN: RAVING RABBIDS



Inspiration

"Our aim was to take clichéd scenarios and to expose our crazy raving Rabbids to them. We were inspired by everything around us, really, and took clichéd experiences from everywhere we looked – TV shows, movies, everyday life, holidays, etc.

The Ubi Montpellier team were the core team behind the game. We would brainstorm ideas, and these sessions were so much fun. There was real inspiration and passion, giving rise to some fantastic ideas – we then developed these ideas and added layers and layers of *RRR* fun and humour. This humour is quite young and Jackass-like and remains consistent throughout the game and imagery.

We developed *RRR* using the Jade Engine (previously used in *BG&E* and *King Kong*), which allowed us to quickly realise and implement our ideas.

We had fun creating mini-games. Each gave us the opportunity to develop a distinctive setting and theme – tropical beaches, underwater worlds, deserts, etc. The common denominator to bring it all together was of course the Rabbids.

An important point to make about the Rabbids is their uniformity – how every single Rabbid should look exactly the same, the only difference between them being their costumes, which differed depending on the situation."

Florent Sacre, art director, Ubisoft

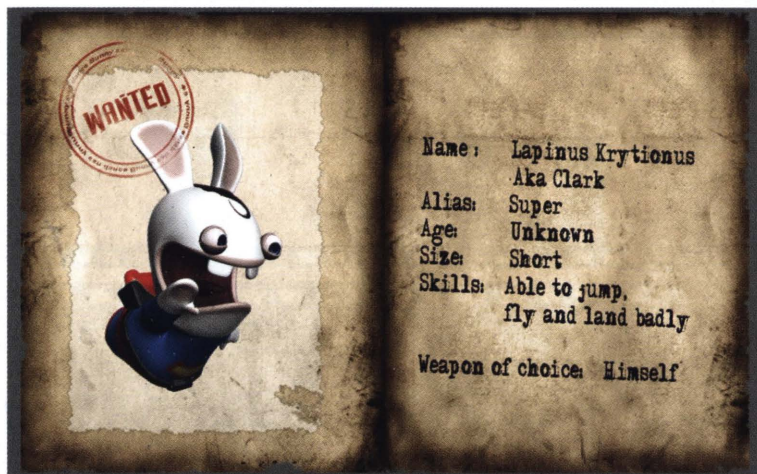
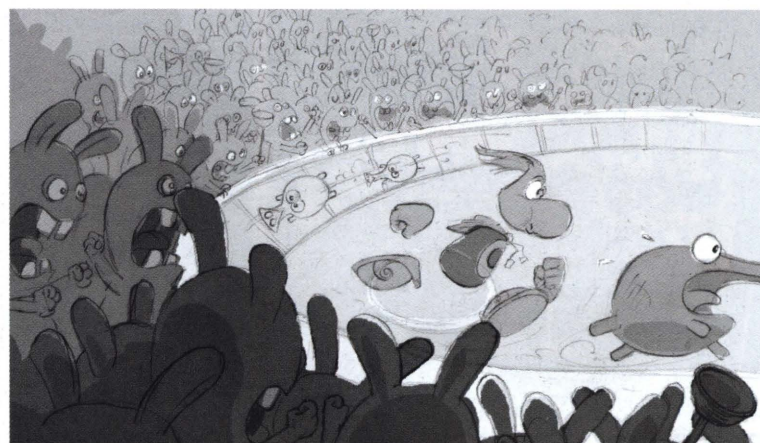


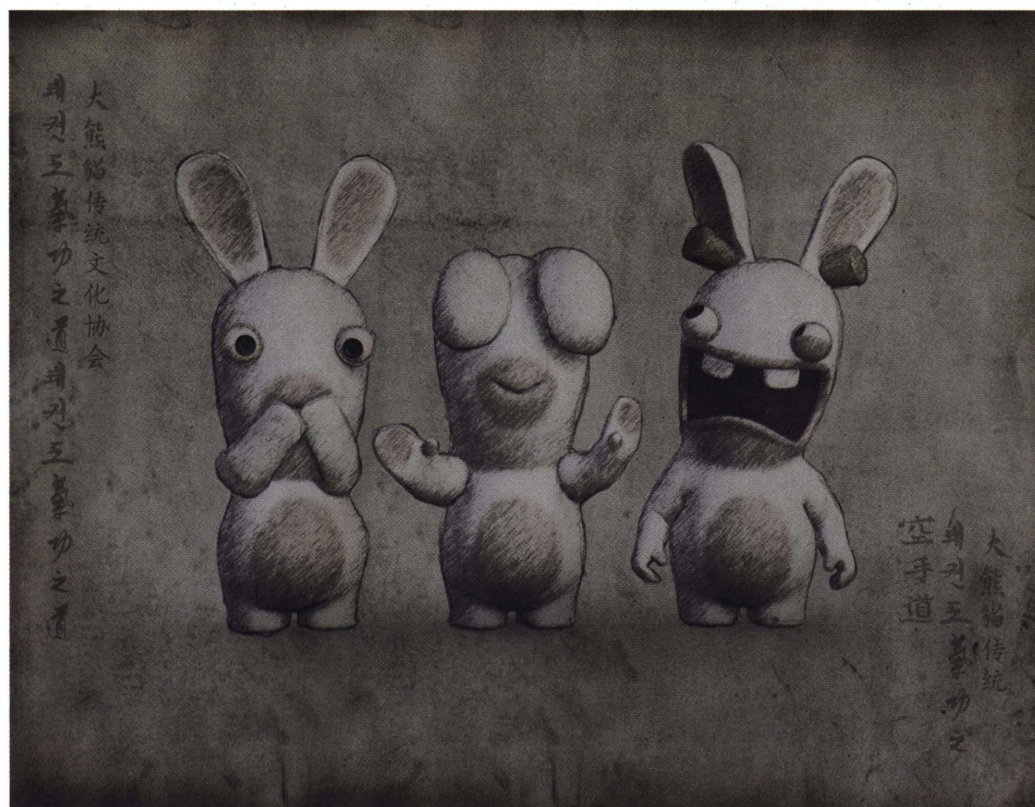
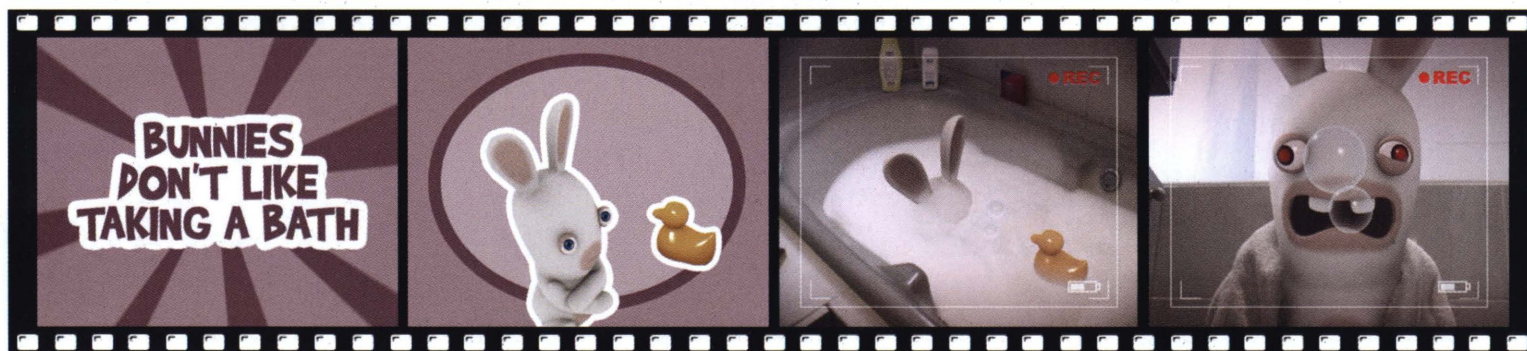
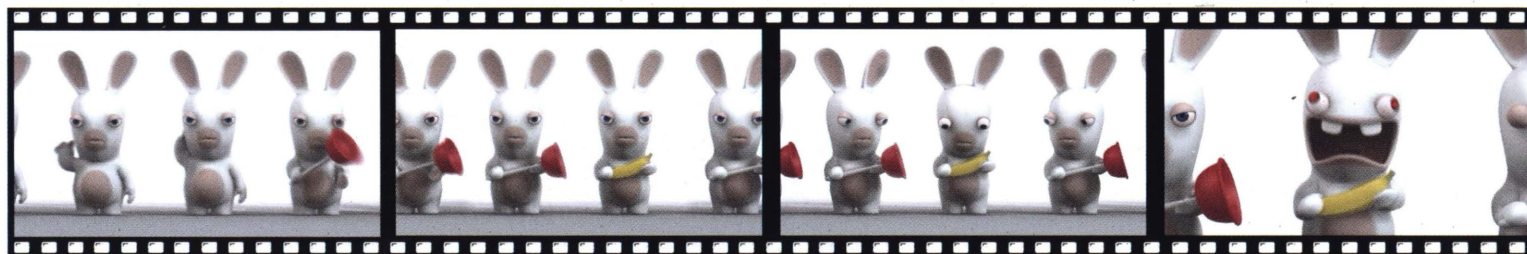
The 'rules' of Rayman's universe

"The *Rayman* universe is directed towards a younger audience and is inspired by fairytales and legends and imaginary universes such as *Dark Crystal*. This game is an alternative to the *Rayman* world we previously knew. We wanted to take the world and to create something fresh and new.

Once this was decided, we were free to do as we pleased. This wasn't a traditional *Rayman* game with a traditional *Rayman* creative style but rather an alternative one, and we were free to create the world from the Rabbids' perspective, with lots of clichéd scenarios."

Florent Sacre









PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (AM2) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: DC, XBOX

SHENMUE





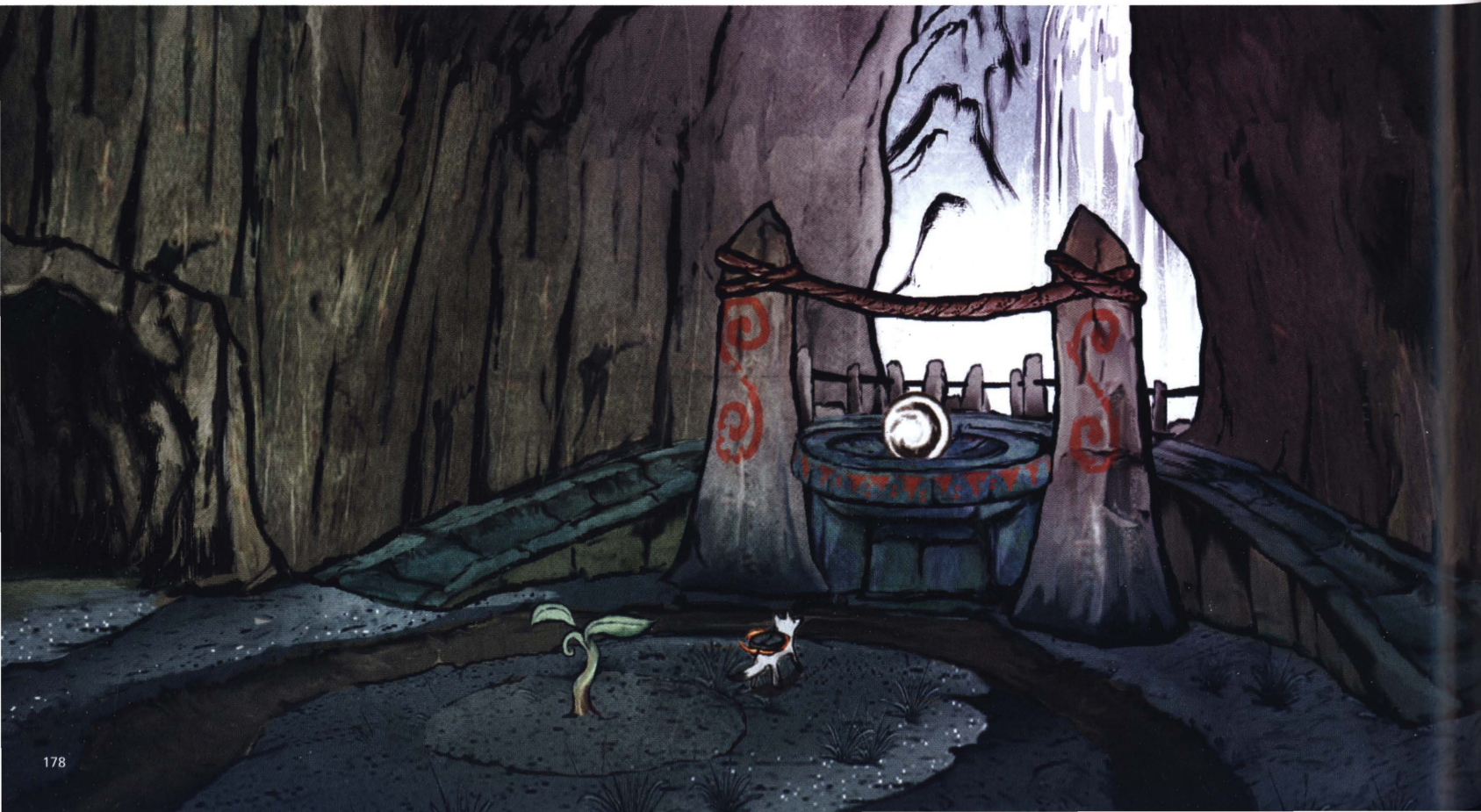


OKAMI



PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: CLOVER STUDIO RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PS2

OKAMI



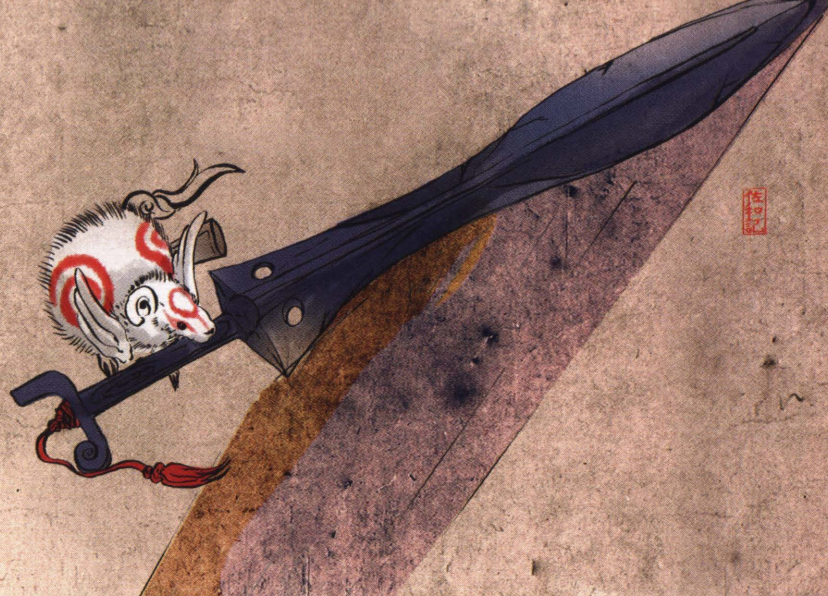




天狗











PUBLISHER: MIDWAY DEVELOPER: EPIC GAMES RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PS3, PC

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Inspiration

"Our inspirations are many – the team has a huge amount of enthusiasm and we constantly strive to produce the best-looking work we can. As a team of artists, we're naturally creative and we pull from all angles – sci-fi films, real world, photography, industrial design, concept cars. Just walking downtown results in a 100 digital photographs of rust and broken buildings...

Previous *Unreal Tournaments* have always pulled from many directions for inspiration, but in this version of *UT* the art direction has been a lot stronger and cohesive. One of the great aspects of working on a title such as this is that you have to deal with the full gamut of game assets, ranging from the real to the unreal – excuse the pun – and it gives us a lot of flexibility when designing the assets.

With environments, for example, we created one set that relied heavily on traditional human urban settings – concrete, metal, glass, everyday pieces that you're familiar with – and this is the hub from which all the other sets can join, too, which creates a huge amount of flexibility when trying to create the diverse range of environments demanded by this game.

The Necris set has a base of Turkish buildings and ruins, and the Necris infector tubes we've designed, when added to any of the other sets, instantly gives the set a great organic feel and also a visual indicator that you are now in Necris territory, which aids the player in their orientation within the singleplayer campaign."
Paul Jones, lead artist



Maintaining a style

"To a certain degree I like having some guidelines right out of the gate – it certainly makes for a quick start when you know how the weapons function and how vehicles behave and how many characters you have to deal with. In this version of *UT*, though, we have taken what was done before and pushed as far as we can in the time allowed considering the scope of the project and working in tandem with the UE3 engine development.

Assets that were in previous games get given the 'flip that weapon/vehicle treatment': we take what was there and improve on visual style and where possible associated animation and effects, giving the assets a more life-like quality. The vehicles now have a visual damage system: pieces break off, fenders get deformed, scorch marks appear as it takes hit after hit until it blows up – the player won't necessarily appreciate all the work put into the game first time around. Let's face it, there's a lot to take in with *UT3*; but each time you play you will notice more and more details and subtleties. Yes, you can have subtlety in a game like *UT3*!

Our rules are fairly straightforward: no magenta, no hazard stripes, and simply make the work look as good as possible. Oh, and flak cannons must be yellow..."

Paul Jones



Art and technology

"Ten years ago, you could make a 250-polygon character in a day; now, with technology moving so fast and normal maps being such a large part of the process, characters take up to two months to achieve final status. Of course, the final results are a million times better and I often find myself asking the artist: 'Is that high or low poly that I'm looking at?' That's how good the new content is – [it looks] almost prerendered, and that's an awesome point to be in the games industry, as really the only limitation is your imagination – and just maybe your schedule."

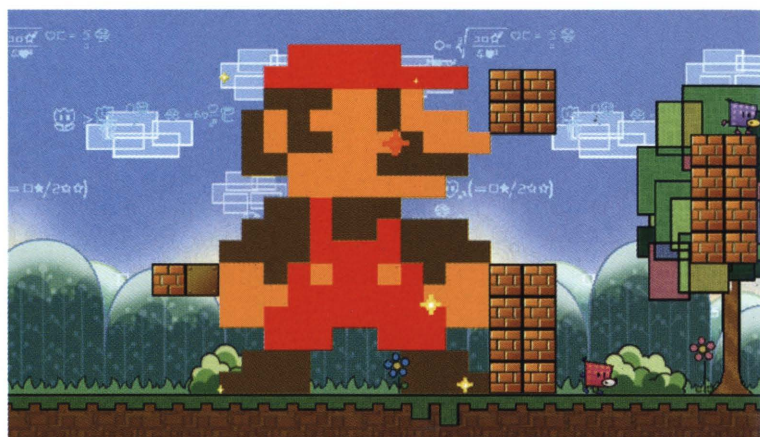
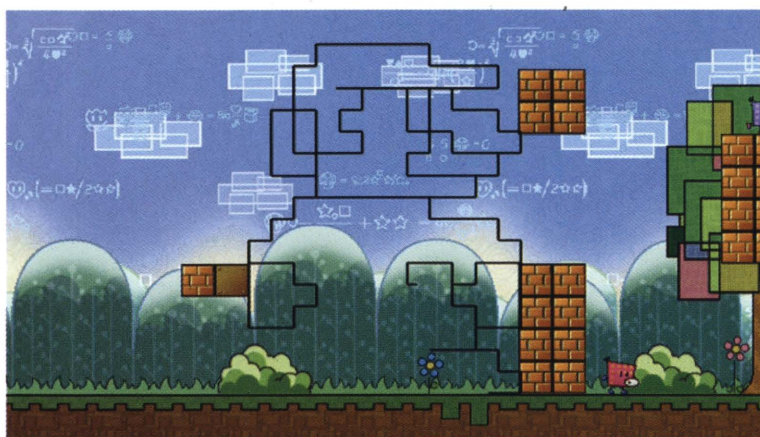
The next-gen material systems make it a pleasure now in creating real-world-looking assets. I love the fact that we can now do convincing skin, carbon fibre, Kevlar, metals, plastics – and it's all in the artists' hands, which is an amazing power to wield and provides us with a great advantage when making all of this content for *UT3*.

Improvements in PCs and gaming consoles and of course UE3 have really made it possible to produce whatever you want. You can be more creative in all areas: animation, effects, environments, scripting, interaction in the levels. It's more about: where do we draw the line?"

Paul Jones



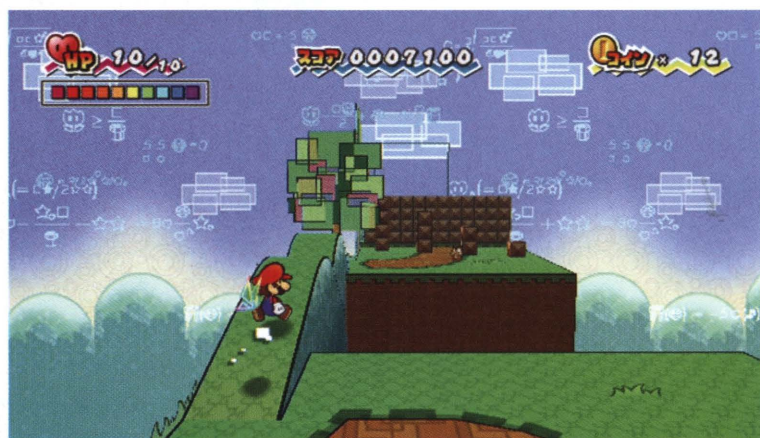
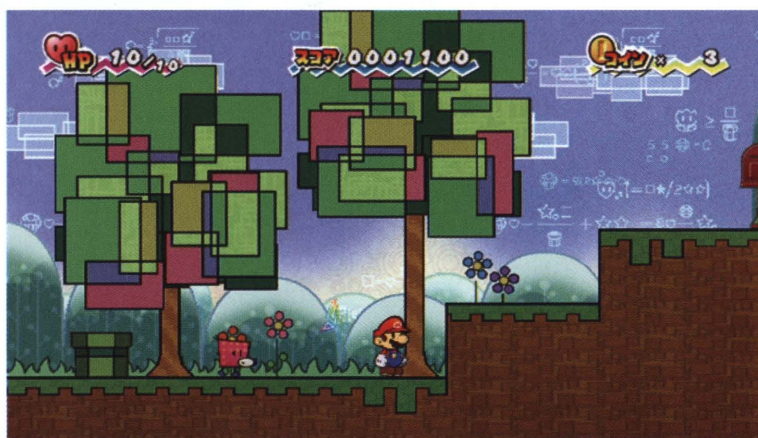
SUPER PAPER MARIO



PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: Wii

SUPER PAPER MARIO





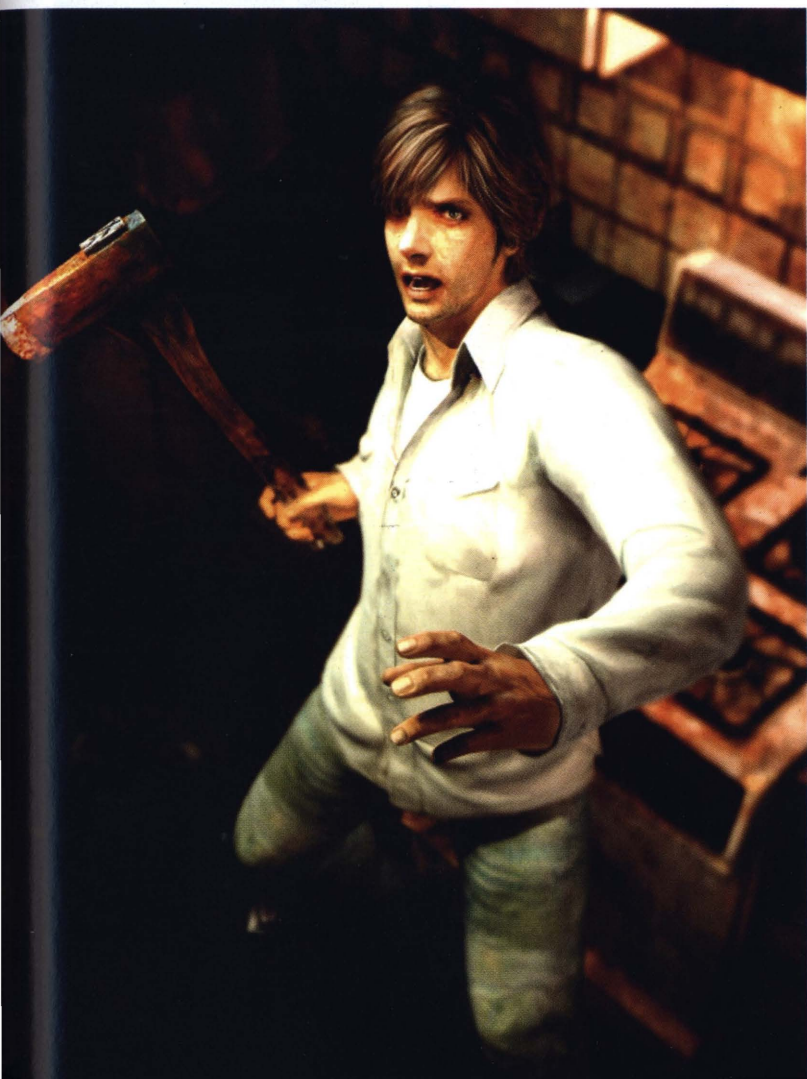




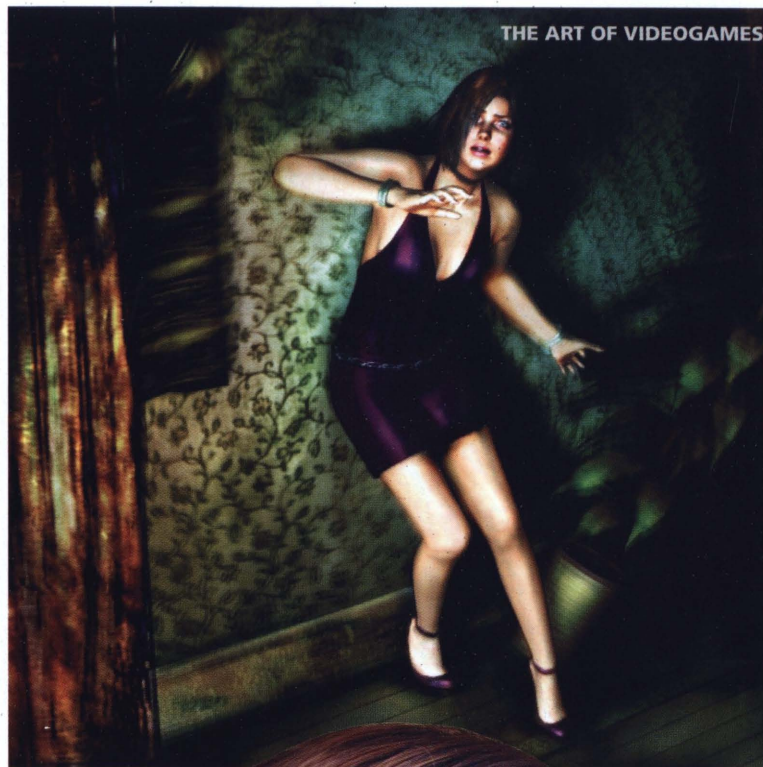


PUBLISHER: KONAMI DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: VARIOUS

SILENT HILL (SERIES)









ROGUE TROOPER

THE ORBITED OVER THE
HOLE. THE POISONS
THE POISONED ZONE. GUNNAR
WAS IN THE ZONE. GUNNAR
COFFIN

HAVE
THE POISONS
THE POISONED ZONE. GUNNAR
WAS IN THE ZONE. GUNNAR
COFFIN

ALL SURVIVORS

WARNING

SEE YOU
EARTHSIDE,
ROGUE!

TO YOUR
LEFT, GUNNAR—
WATCH OUT!

YAAAAAGH!

LAS-SCALPEL
READY, GUNNAR.
I'M GOING IN...

"I KNEW, GUNNAR'S CHIP
PLANT WAS ALREADY
FORBIDING HIS PERSONALITY
... I HAD SIXTY

ROGUE—I WANT
OF THAT. C'MON,
—GET THAT
OUT OF MY

—HOLE... THE TROOPERS WHO
KTS BEFORE MORE OF THEM
BY BLACK HOLE. NU EARTH
RTANT — IT FELT THEN THAT
LAXY WOULD BE AT RISK!"

AS A
NORTS
DER
VE AFTER
TO A

LUCKY
EVER ENGINE
TO CR

24

CAME AWAKE...

HUH? I'VE BEEN HAVING
AGAIN, BUT I PROMISED GUNNAR
HIM AND HIS RIFLE. JUST LIKE
BAGMAN AND HEL

ENEMY! ENEMY!
TAKE HIM ALIVE!

YOU FILTHY
NORTS

I—I WANT
ROGUE. I GOT TO
NOW YOU WERE THERE
LIKE

DON'T NEED A
NOT WHILE I
ME

POW



Reinterpreting a Rogue

"The first step in deciding how best to interpret Rogue Trooper as a console game was to go back and re-read all the original comics in our 2000AD archives – it's a tough job, but someone's got to do it! In returning to the original source material, we picked out key elements that appeared to define the character and world.

There were the obvious (but still crucial) elements like the fact that he is a blue-skinned genetically engineered infantryman fighting in a future war with the personalities of three of his dead comrades implanted into his helmet, gun and backpack. Pretty cool stuff for adapting into a game but it was also crucial to bring Rogue to life as a character: how does Rogue become who he is? How did he come to be accompanied by three disembodied buddies? Why does he continue to fight in the polluted and desolate world of Nu Earth? We had to answer these questions over the course of the game in order to draw in audiences unfamiliar with the IP.

It was particularly useful having some members of the team who weren't previously aware of the IP because they had no preconceptions and would force us to explain why something was cool or worthwhile putting into the game. This was a crucial reality-check, without which it would have been tougher to maintain a balanced and self-critical eye on what we were doing.

One of the key aspects of Rogue is his physical athleticism: he is a foot-soldier but, more than that, he has been genetically engineered to thrive in the toxic and brutal battlefields of the future and strike fear into the hearts of the evil Norts in their cumbersome protective chem-suits.

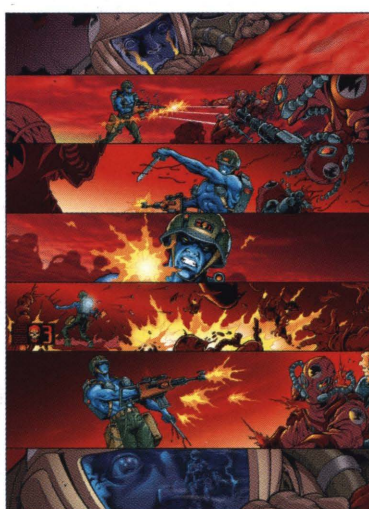
We needed environments that accommodated the core game mechanics of wall-hugging, using cover, climbing, vaulting and diving whilst still appearing organic and believable. This was a significant challenge for the level artists to overcome.

One of the other tricky aspects of the licence was the need to balance up-close-and-personal combat gameplay with long-range gunplay and wide-open blasted vistas. The upshot of this was that the levels were huge in area but still required considerable attention to detail in smaller sections. Many of the repeated environmental details like barricades and Nort bunkers were set up as 'templates' which meant that all the hard work of setting it up with flagging information to allow the player to interact with it, and for the NPC AI to navigate around it and use it intelligently as cover and any other necessary game-logic, only had to be set up once and it could be used multiple times without having to repeat the same work over and over."

Tim Jones, head of design

PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: REBELLION RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: PC, PS2, XBOX

ROGUE TROOPER





Working with 2000AD IP

"There are inherent challenges associated with creating a game based on established IP: all stakeholders obviously have opinions on how the licence should be interpreted and their needs have to be accommodated. Fortunately, since the Rogue Trooper IP is owned by Rebellion – along with 2000AD and all its other hundreds of characters – it was very straightforward to get immediate feedback on the direction in which to take the designs and the game.

At various stages through the production, we had nerve-wracking presentations to Tharg the Mighty and his droids at the Galaxy's Greatest Comic, but we were relieved when he judged that the game was 'Zarjaz' and 'rich in thrill power'.

We also benefited from a huge back catalogue of source material and

inspiration, which gives a massive head start on production phases like concept art and previsualisation. It also was an invaluable resource to refer back to: in many cases where we needed to invent a game mechanic or character, we could go back through the 20 years of source material and find a precedent.

Working with completely new concepts is incredibly creatively rewarding but it brings its own challenges: you can't really discover whether or not your story and characters work with an audience until the game is finished, whereas with established IP, you can take comfort in the knowledge that there is at least some aspect of what you are doing that has already proven popular and has a fan-base ready to check it out."

Tim Jones

MK.05



The 'rules' of Rogue Trooper

"The art style of the Rogue Trooper game evolved over the course of the project and generally we found ourselves treading a fine line between gritty realism and comic book. The characters had a deliberately painted, stylised look to them as a nod to the original source material but we took a different approach with the environments themselves. We had to be careful and make sure that the differing styles of the characters and the environments worked together in a stylistically coherent manner. The grimy, worn and weathered nature of the environment texturing was a constant throughout production. Nu Earth has a harsh and polluted atmosphere that quickly corrodes and ages everything within it. The atmospherics also contributed to the dramatic and occasionally surreal skies that play host to the most dominant and constant landmark in the game: the black hole, over which the war is being fought.

Some of the early concepts depicted the world in more desaturated and desolate tones, but as we moved further through development more vivid colour palettes were introduced, partly as a measure to make the game more immediately appealing to casual audiences.

Overall, the goal of the art style was to make the game feel like the comic strips had come alive, and in that sense, feedback from the fans suggests we succeeded."

Tim Jones







PUBLISHER: VIVENDI/VALVE SOFTWARE DEVELOPER: VALVE SOFTWARE RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: 360, PC, PS3

HALF-LIFE 2 (SERIES)





Inspiration

"We wanted *Episode Two* to be visually distinct from *Half-Life 2* and *Episode One*, both to create new opportunities for play experiences and to give players a sense of progression through the story. To accomplish this, we chose to have the player to move towards increasingly open and mountainous terrain as they ventured farther from City 17.

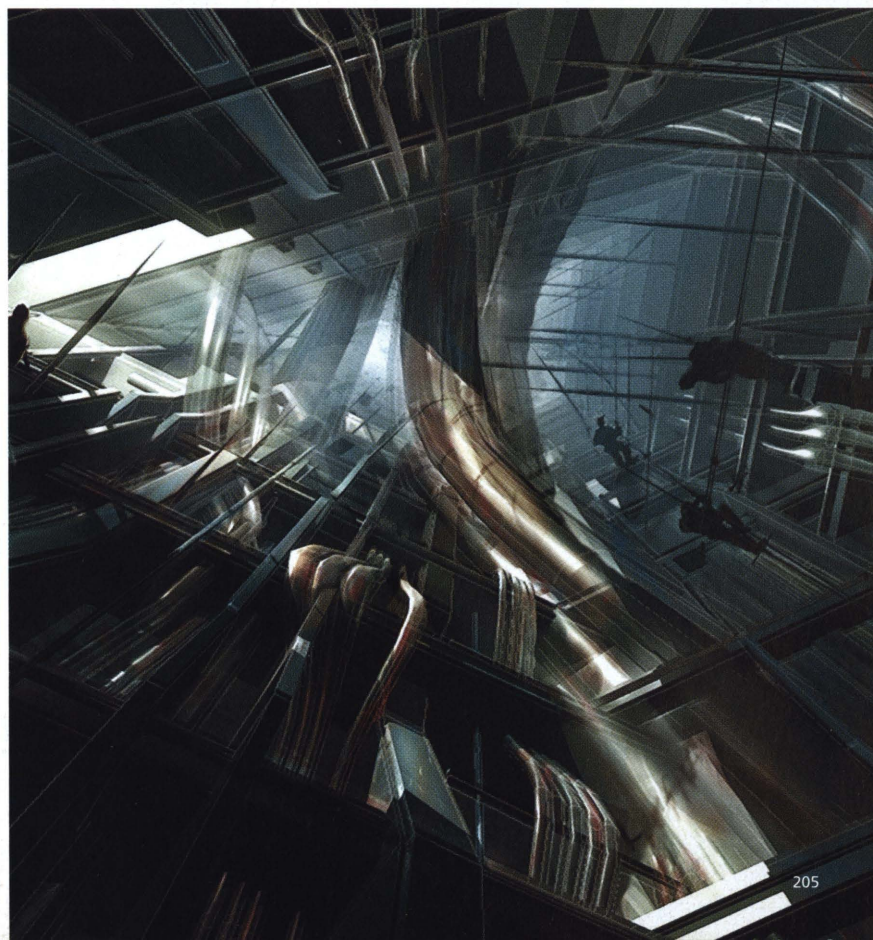
Our primary source of inspiration always comes from research, so we start every project by gathering large amounts of reference material. The purpose is to inspire and help us fully understand a subject and recreate it believably. Where possible we try to do our research first hand, so for *Episode Two* we looked to the Cascade Mountains of our own Washington state for our 'White Forest' setting. We also explored many of the rundown industrial areas around the Seattle area, which provided great inspiration for many of the abandoned facilities in *Episode Two*. For example, Fort Casey on Whidbey Island was a great source of old weathered pre-WWII-era bunkers and provided excellent texture reference for aged and cracked concrete.

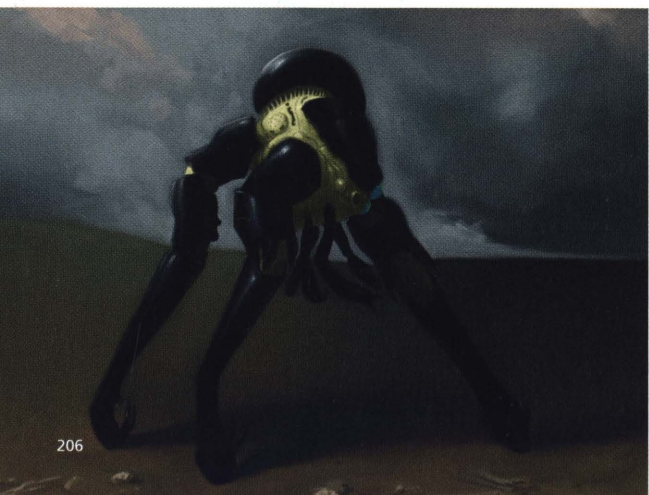
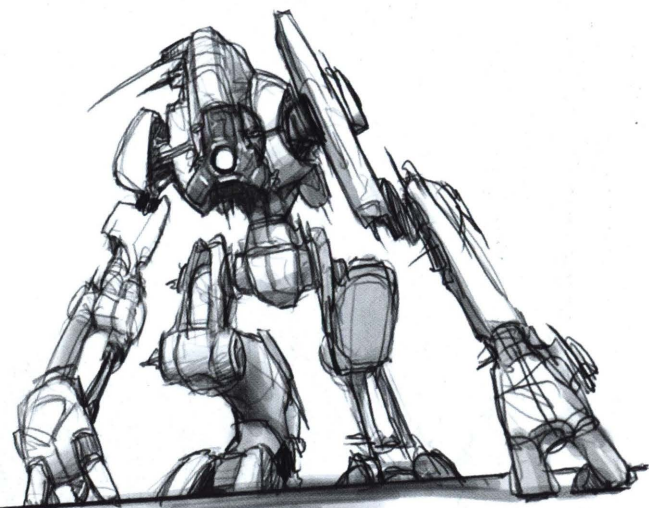
For strong visual composition we draw inspiration from many sources. One example is Frank Brangwyn and his etchings in particular are worth studying. These are dense in detail and texture, yet are very easy on the eye. Using strong foreground silhouettes the eye is forced to wander on to areas that are carefully illuminated to display the image's central theme. Quite often this area will again fall off into blackness, further framing the image's content. A light/dark/light/dark procession is common in Brangwyn's work and it's this stacking of shape and tone that allows the eye to drift and settle on areas of his choosing while not being overwhelmed by heavy detail.

Applying this to game design makes a lot of sense as it provides a set of rules when selecting foreground shapes, mid-ground lighting or designing background vistas. The premise is to give the scene a strong read so players are more comfortable when navigating while solving a puzzle or dealing with combat. In theory the world then becomes stylised yet stays grounded in a believable fashion.

We also found inspiration in the industrial photography of Bernd and Hilla Becher, the architectural visions of Hugh Ferriss, and the etchings of Gustav Doré, to name just a few."

David Speyrer, project lead, *Episode Two*





Episodic gaming

"Establishing a design theme that all our rules and decisions are based on is critical for every project. A design theme maintains a consistent vision across the whole project. Location, history, season, colour, lighting, texture, silhouette and proportion are some of the design elements that need to match and work together.

We start by establishing the location. *Half-Life 2* and *Episodes One* and *Two* are based in a fictional part of Eastern Europe, so all our visual elements try to reflect this.

Next, we consider the history of the space and try to tell a story with the visual design. Our architectural choices communicate location in the world, whether the setting is contemporary or not, and what the space was used for originally. The juxtaposition of alien elements into an otherwise mundane scene can also tell a story in a purely visual fashion while conveying a sense of unease. Blood splatters, boarded-up doors, makeshift human shelters, and lack of power all convey a sense of what might have happened before the player arrived on the scene.

Time of day and season served as constraints on our visual decisions and provide information that can be communicated and used in composition.

Playing cool colours off warm, for example, is also important because colour temperature can convey much that the player might not initially be aware of. A cool foreground revealing a warm mid-ground instantly simplifies what may be a detailed space and hands the player valuable information on a more subtle level. It's important to view an environment where the mid-ground stands alone and is not confused with the foreground or background. Having three distinct slices makes for greater clarity of vision, be that conceptual or practical.

Lighting is perhaps one of the most critical design elements for product consistency. For each space we try to establish a dominant and secondary light (one warm, the other cool). Lighting can be used to create silhouettes that enhance the perception of depth, create visually interesting shadows, and provide the player with a navigation goal.

Setting and colour palette were the primary elements that distinguishes *Episode One* from *Episode Two*. The cooler palette and abundance of evergreen trees and more natural terrain in *Episode Two* evokes a more northerly setting and contrasts it with the post-apocalyptic warm-toned cityscape of *Episode One*."

David Speyrer







PUBLISHER: TAKE TWO DEVELOPER: 3D REALMS/HUMAN HEAD RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: 360, PC

PREY









Inspiration

"One of the mantras of our game this time round was to 'bring the alien battle into your backyard'. A lot of our visual inspiration has come from creating a strong sense of juxtaposition by putting very creepy and bizarre aliens against very grounded and real environments, such as an everyday gas station or a conventional interstate truck stop.

We spent time looking at the bio-luminescent features you get in certain fish like jellyfish and anglerfish. We then looked to mix those concepts in with forms that inspire more fear or caution in people – like the sharp forms in coral reefs and spines on crustaceous fish."

Peter Franco, art director, BlackSite

"For our creatures, we used a lot of natural forms for inspiration. A lot of the creature concepts we came up with were inspired by deep ocean sea life. We wanted something familiar but creepy and dangerous.

For a lot of the environments we looked to natural catastrophes like earthquakes, storms, or the recent tsunamis. This was both fictionally and visually a natural for us since we wanted the sense of damage and danger to be immediate and familiar like something you may have seen on the news in the last five years."

Brian Hagan, concept art lead, BlackSite



PUBLISHER: MIDWAY DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (MIDWAY STUDIOS AUSTIN) RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC, PS3

BLACKSITE: AREA 51





Art and technology

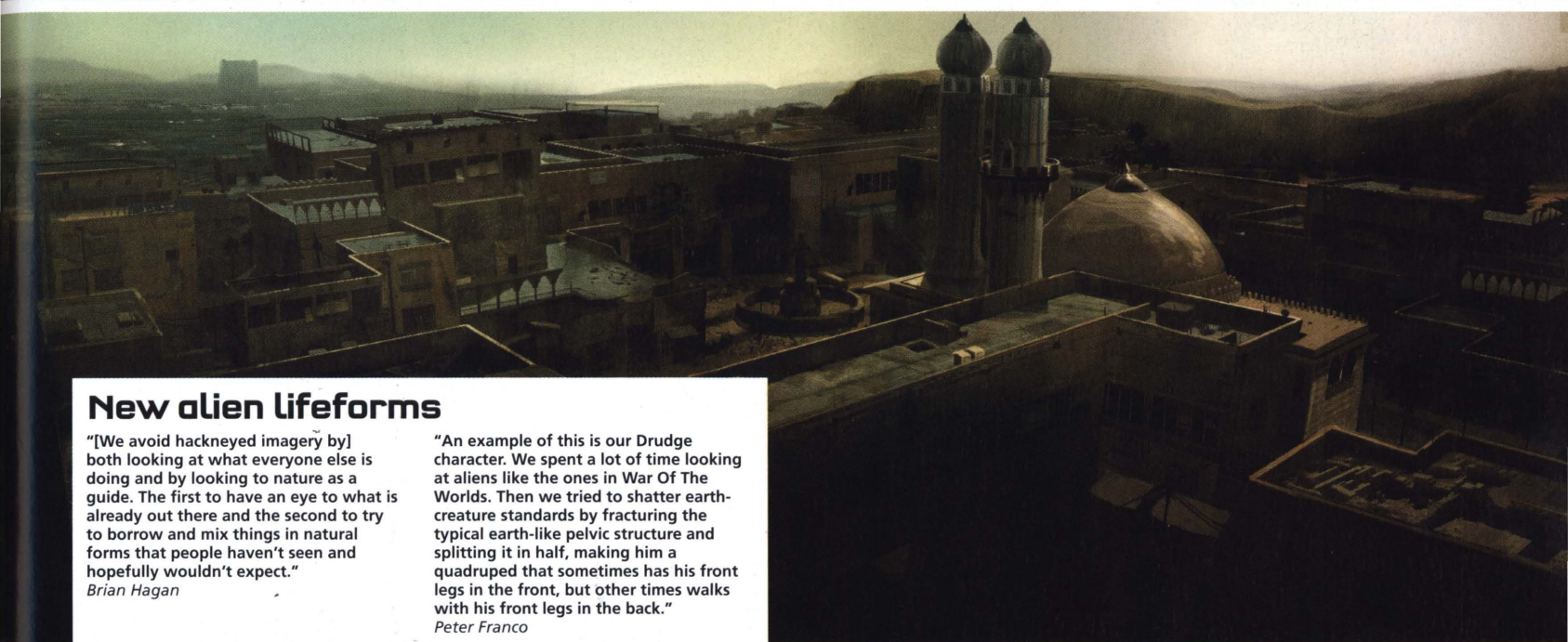
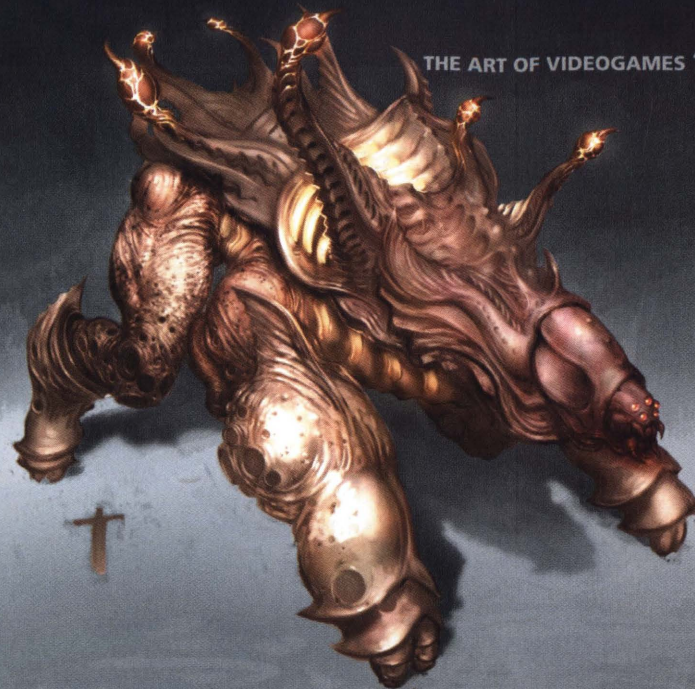
"With our upcoming Xbox Live demo, we were able to pull off a truly immersive rainy, small-town America backdrop in ways not possible on previous-gen consoles. The reflective, puddling water effects on the roadways and distortion on the building as the water runs down the walls are all small details that would not have been possible before. This requires us to think of these things much earlier in the concept phase; and in turn, requiring more detail in our concept images. The same is true of our characters."

Peter Franco

"With characters, you can [now] fully realise translucency, transmission or shimmer to their skin. It allows you to think of relationship not purely in a sense of colour and form but also as characteristics. Two characters that may not seem to be related may be, given the right circumstances or lighting. It makes you think about the character in a much more complete way."

Brian Hagan





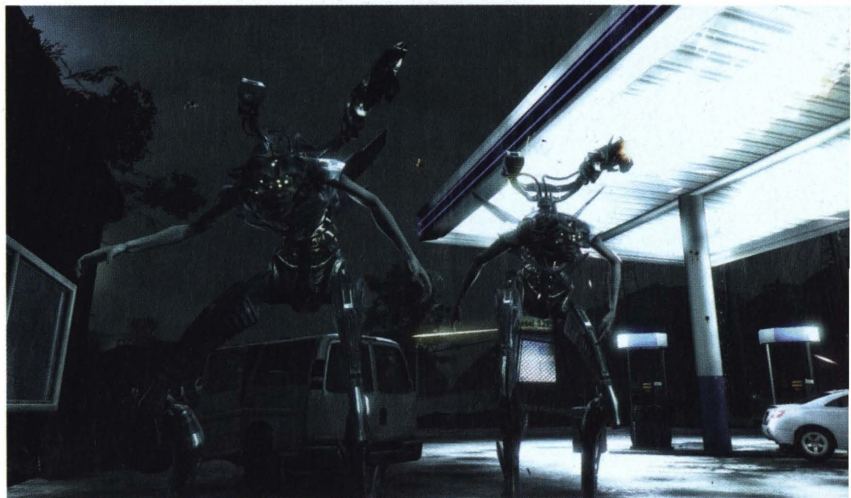
New alien lifeforms

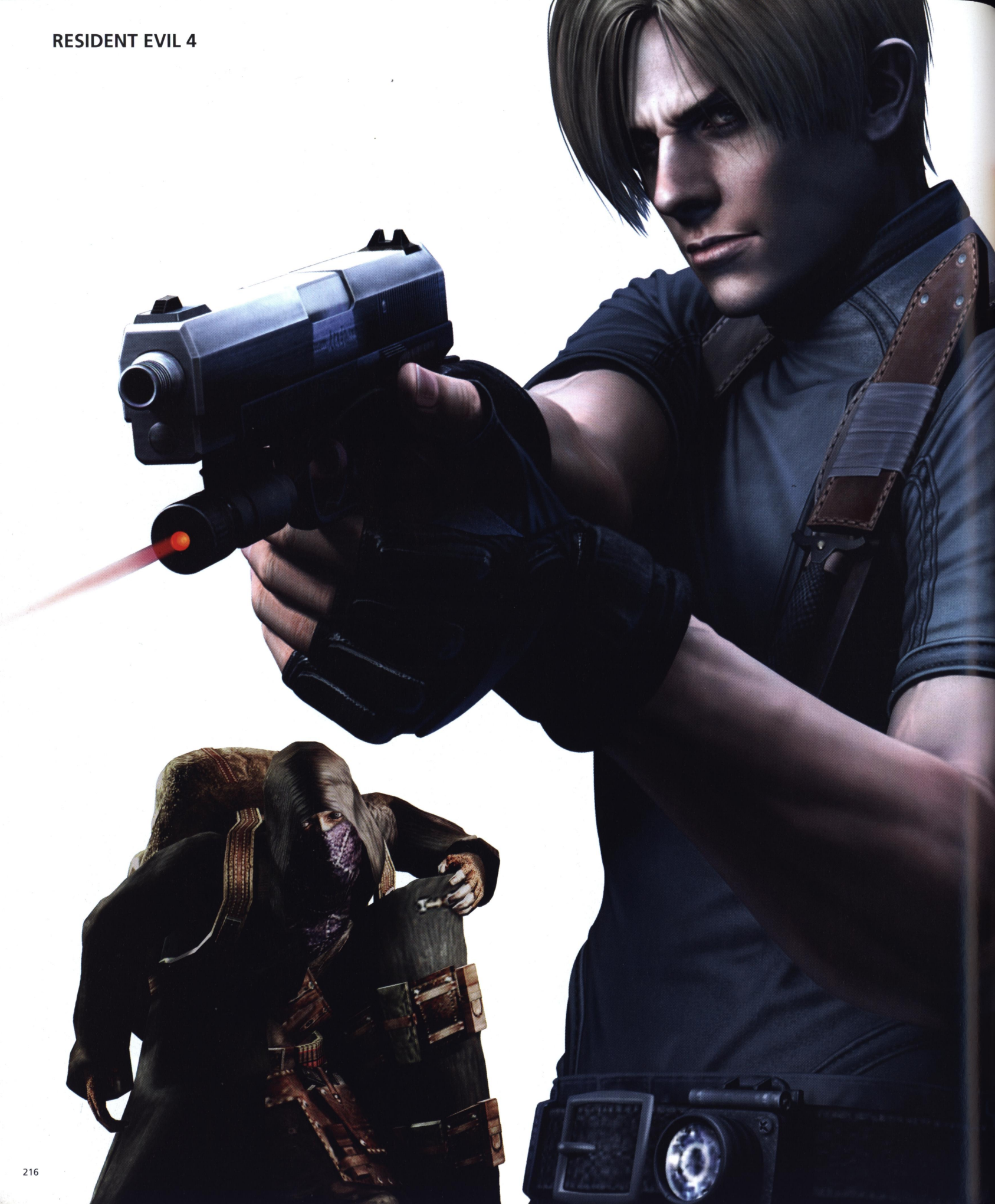
"[We avoid hackneyed imagery by] both looking at what everyone else is doing and by looking to nature as a guide. The first to have an eye to what is already out there and the second to try to borrow and mix things in natural forms that people haven't seen and hopefully wouldn't expect."

Brian Hagan

"An example of this is our Drudge character. We spent a lot of time looking at aliens like the ones in *War Of The Worlds*. Then we tried to shatter earth-creature standards by fracturing the typical earth-like pelvic structure and splitting it in half, making him a quadruped that sometimes has his front legs in the front, but other times walks with his front legs in the back."

Peter Franco

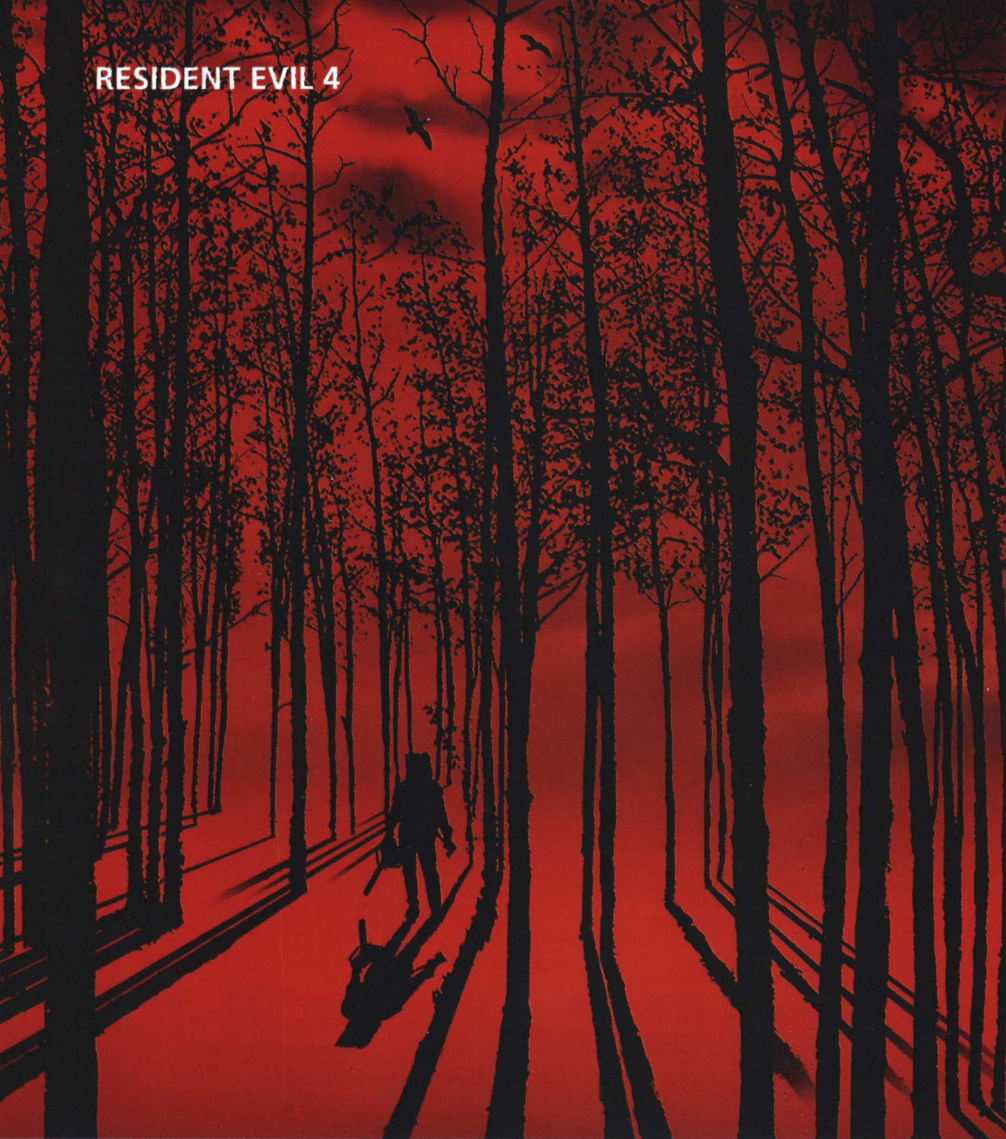




PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (PRODUCTION STUDIO 4) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: GC, PS2, PC

RESIDENT EVIL 4







THE OUTSIDER



PUBLISHER: TBA DEVELOPER: FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS RELEASE: TBA FORMAT: TBA

THE OUTSIDER



Inspiration

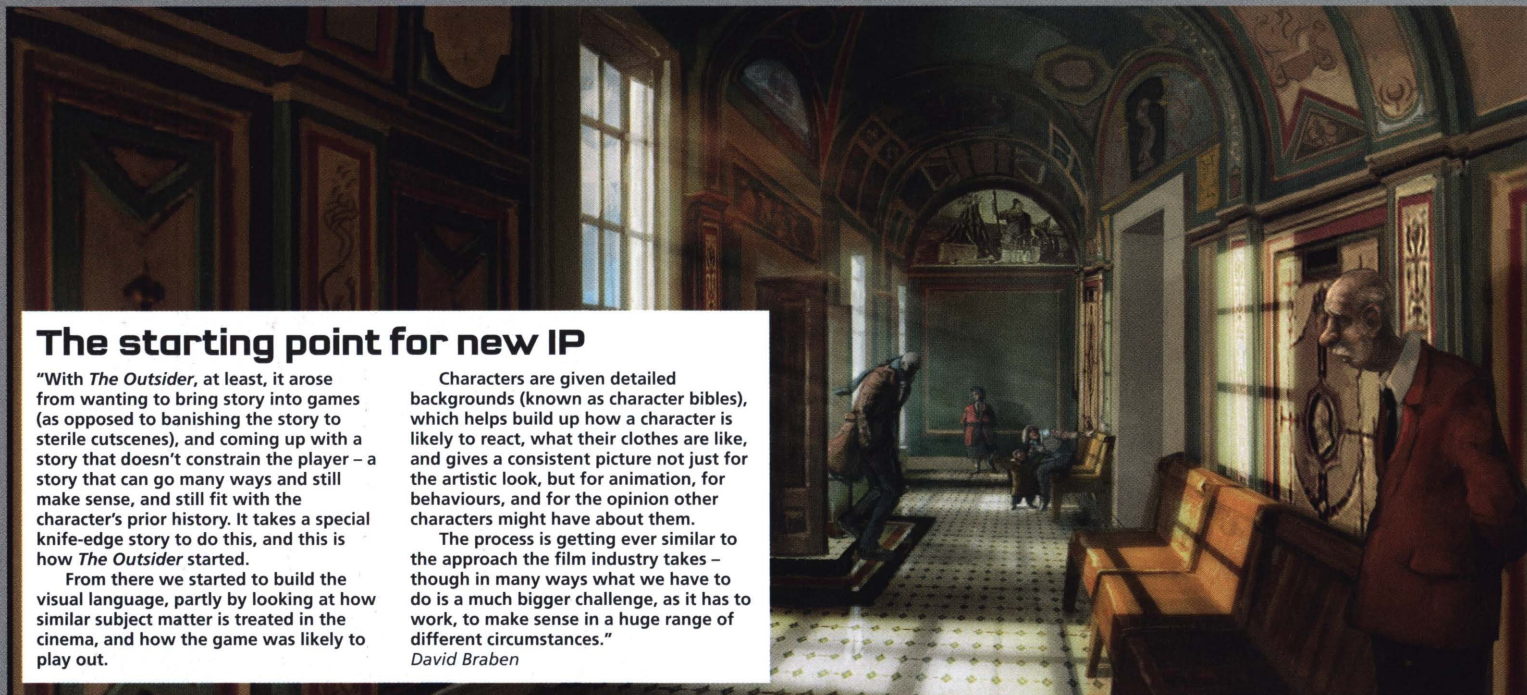
"There are a number of different elements to this. Firstly, we wanted a unique look; wanting people to look at the screenshots and immediately realise it was a shot from *The Outsider*, even if key characters or settings were not in the frame. The inspiration for this was from the cinema – films like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Thelma And Louise* have a 'look' of their own because of the way the film was processed and the attention to lighting. We are simulating a subtle interaction of film emulsions to get that look. In addition to this, we are using other film techniques (eg, focus, vignetting, exposure) to reinforce the cinematic feel.

The second element is of course Washington DC. This is great inspiration for a game anyway; many of the locations in the DC area speak for themselves both in look and in gameplay – the CIA HQ in Langley, the Pentagon, the Whitehouse, the Capitol, the FBI building.

The final element to inspire is from the many outstanding thrillers and spy dramas like *Ronin*, the *Bourne* films, *The Fugitive*, *Three Days Of The Condor*, *Clear And Present Danger* – the list goes on."

David Braben, founder, Frontier





The starting point for new IP

"With *The Outsider*, at least, it arose from wanting to bring story into games (as opposed to banishing the story to sterile cutscenes), and coming up with a story that doesn't constrain the player – a story that can go many ways and still make sense, and still fit with the character's prior history. It takes a special knife-edge story to do this, and this is how *The Outsider* started.

From there we started to build the visual language, partly by looking at how similar subject matter is treated in the cinema, and how the game was likely to play out.

Characters are given detailed backgrounds (known as character bibles), which helps build up how a character is likely to react, what their clothes are like, and gives a consistent picture not just for the artistic look, but for animation, for behaviours, and for the opinion other characters might have about them.

The process is getting ever similar to the approach the film industry takes – though in many ways what we have to do is a much bigger challenge, as it has to work, to make sense in a huge range of different circumstances."

David Braben





Character traits

"Whether a character is appealing is not purely a visual thing – or at least it shouldn't be! How they behave, how they sound, the way they go about things can be appealing – or can be downright annoying.

Most of us know the sort of characters that do appeal to us – both as potential player characters and as bad guys. Plausibility is a big part of it; whether the

player can empathise with them. For bad guys, for example, having a plausible reason for being the way they are goes a long way to make the world feel solid, and therefore appealing. We have also tried to get the characters not to feel too 'comic book', as we think this adds to their appeal, and draws the player into their world."

David Braben



METAL GEAR SOLID

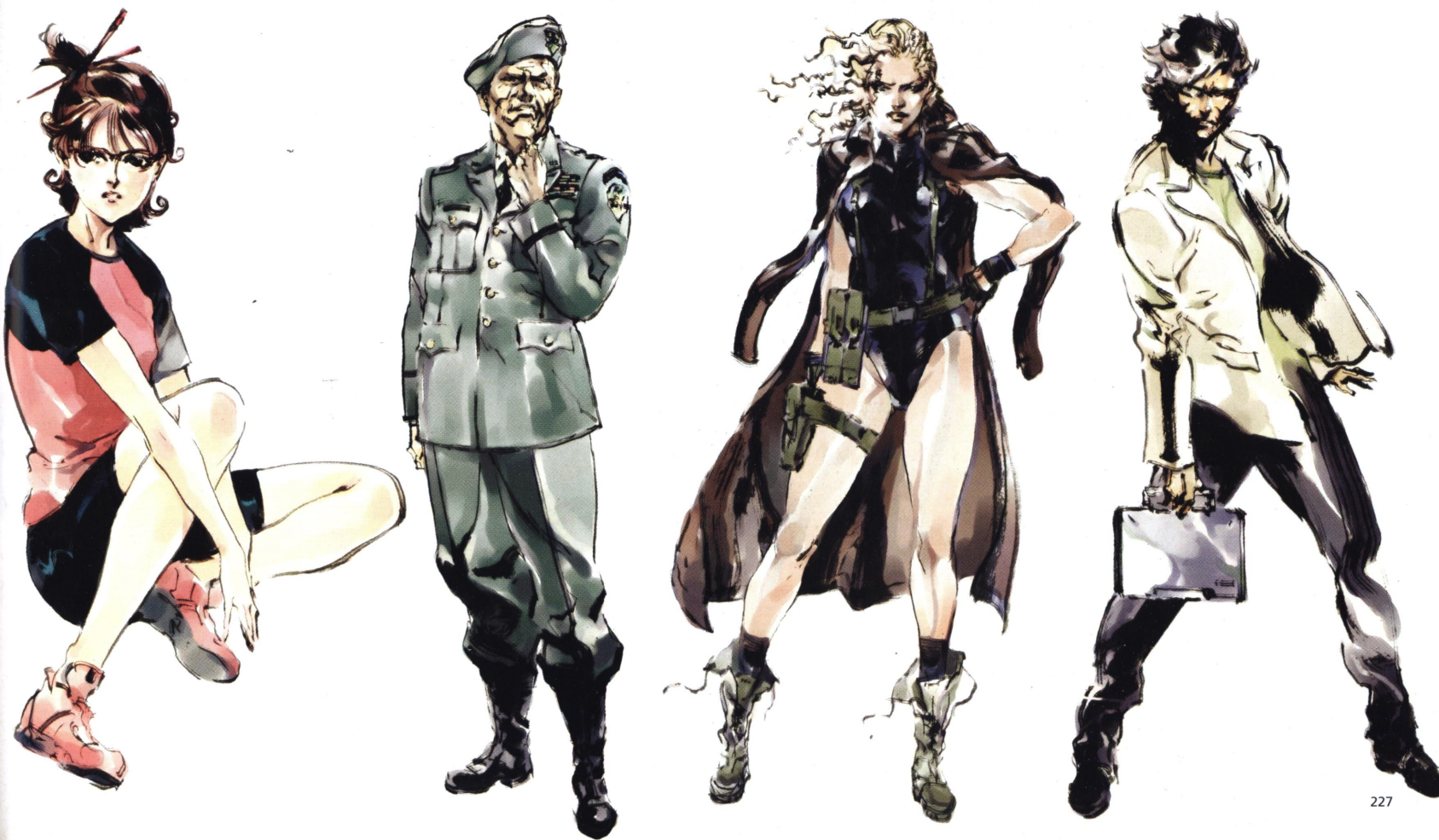
PUBLISHER: KONAMI DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS) RELEASE DATE: VARIOUS FORMAT: VARIOUS

METAL GEAR SOLID (SERIES)



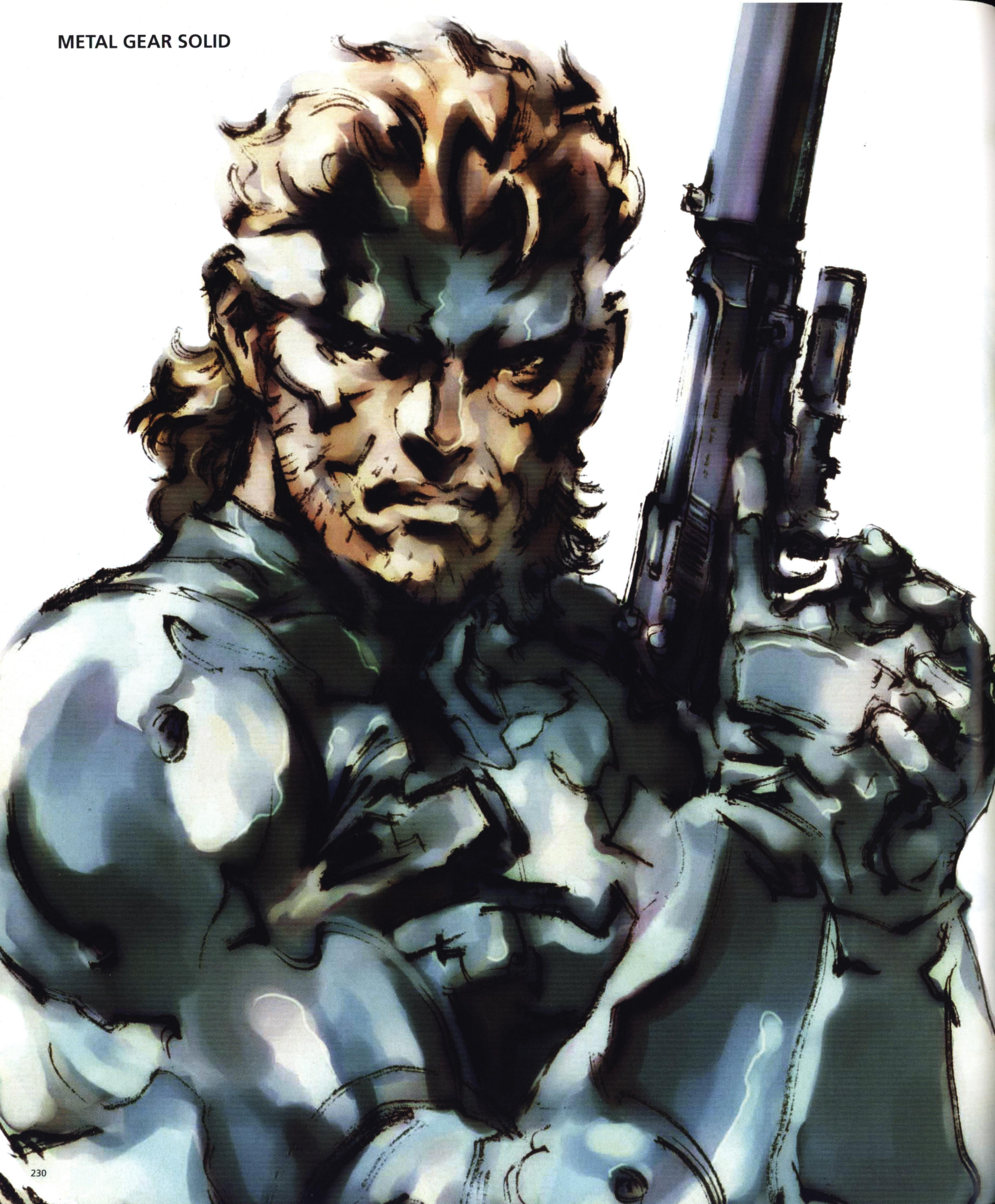








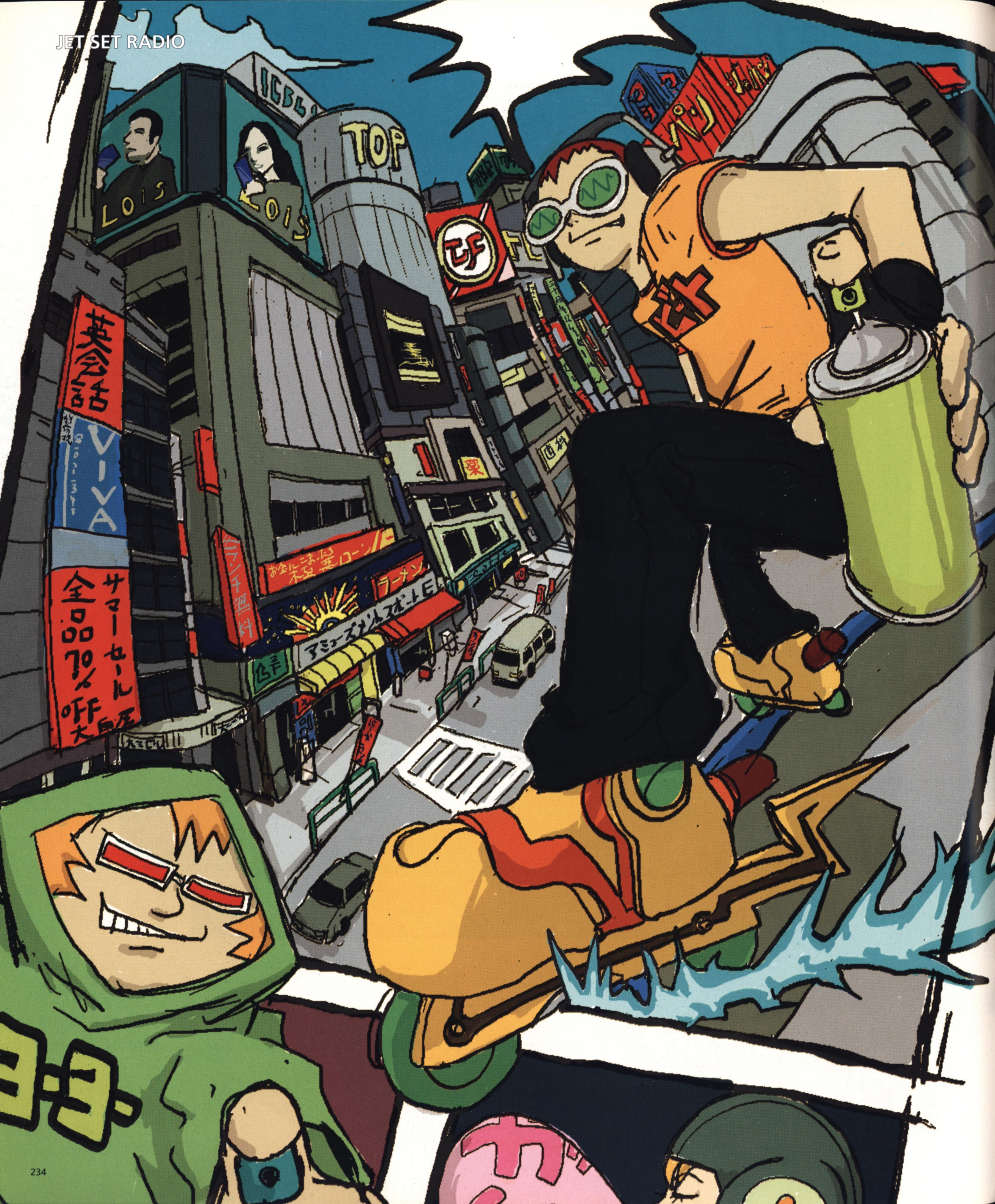












PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (SMILEBIT) RELEASE: VARIOUS FORMAT: DC/XBOX/GBA

JET SET RADIO (SERIES)







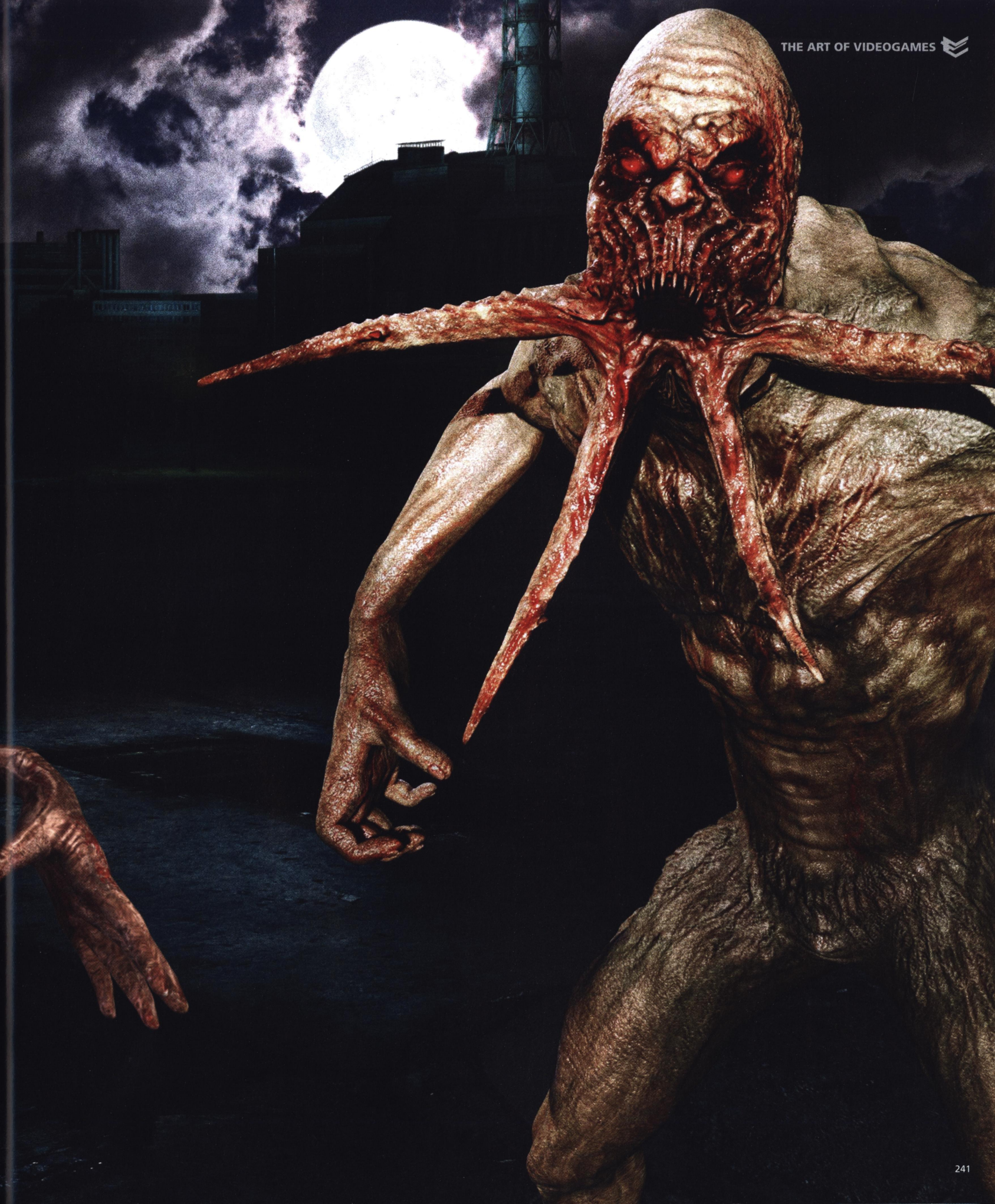


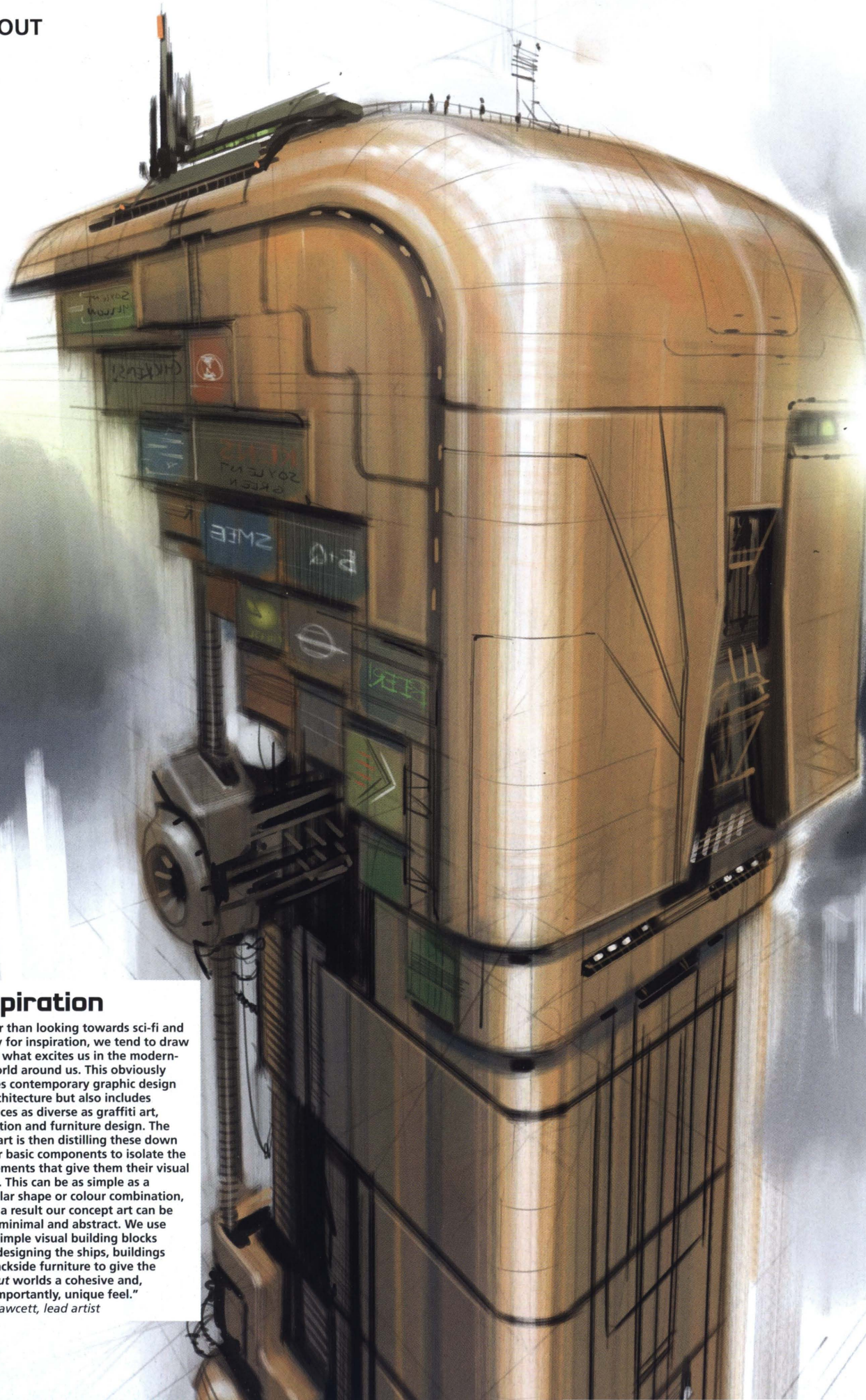
PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: GSC GAME WORLD RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: PC

STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL





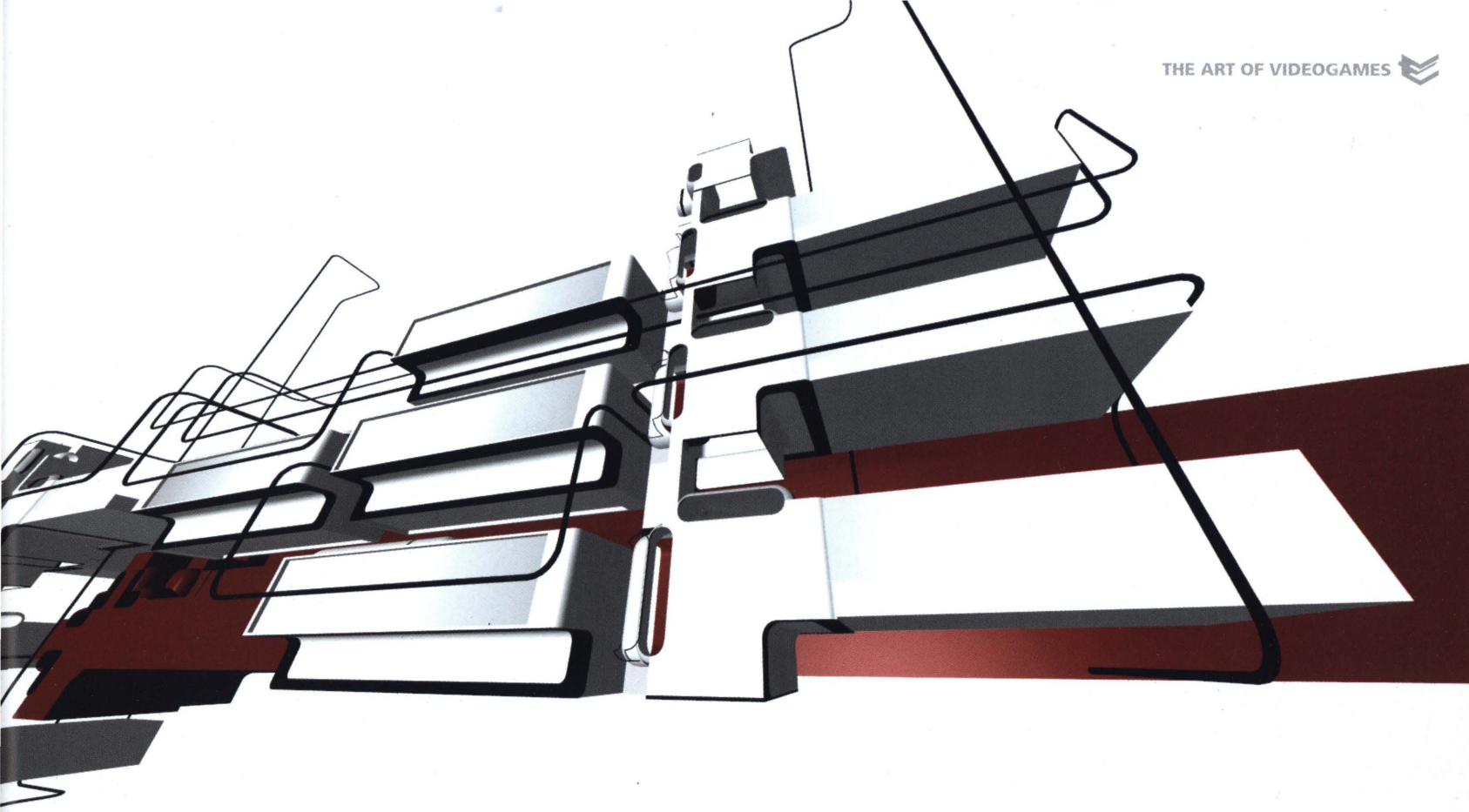




Inspiration

"Rather than looking towards sci-fi and fantasy for inspiration, we tend to draw it from what excites us in the modern-day world around us. This obviously includes contemporary graphic design and architecture but also includes influences as diverse as graffiti art, illustration and furniture design. The hard part is then distilling these down to their basic components to isolate the key elements that give them their visual appeal. This can be as simple as a particular shape or colour combination, and as a result our concept art can be pretty minimal and abstract. We use these simple visual building blocks when designing the ships, buildings and trackside furniture to give the *Wipeout* worlds a cohesive and, most importantly, unique feel."

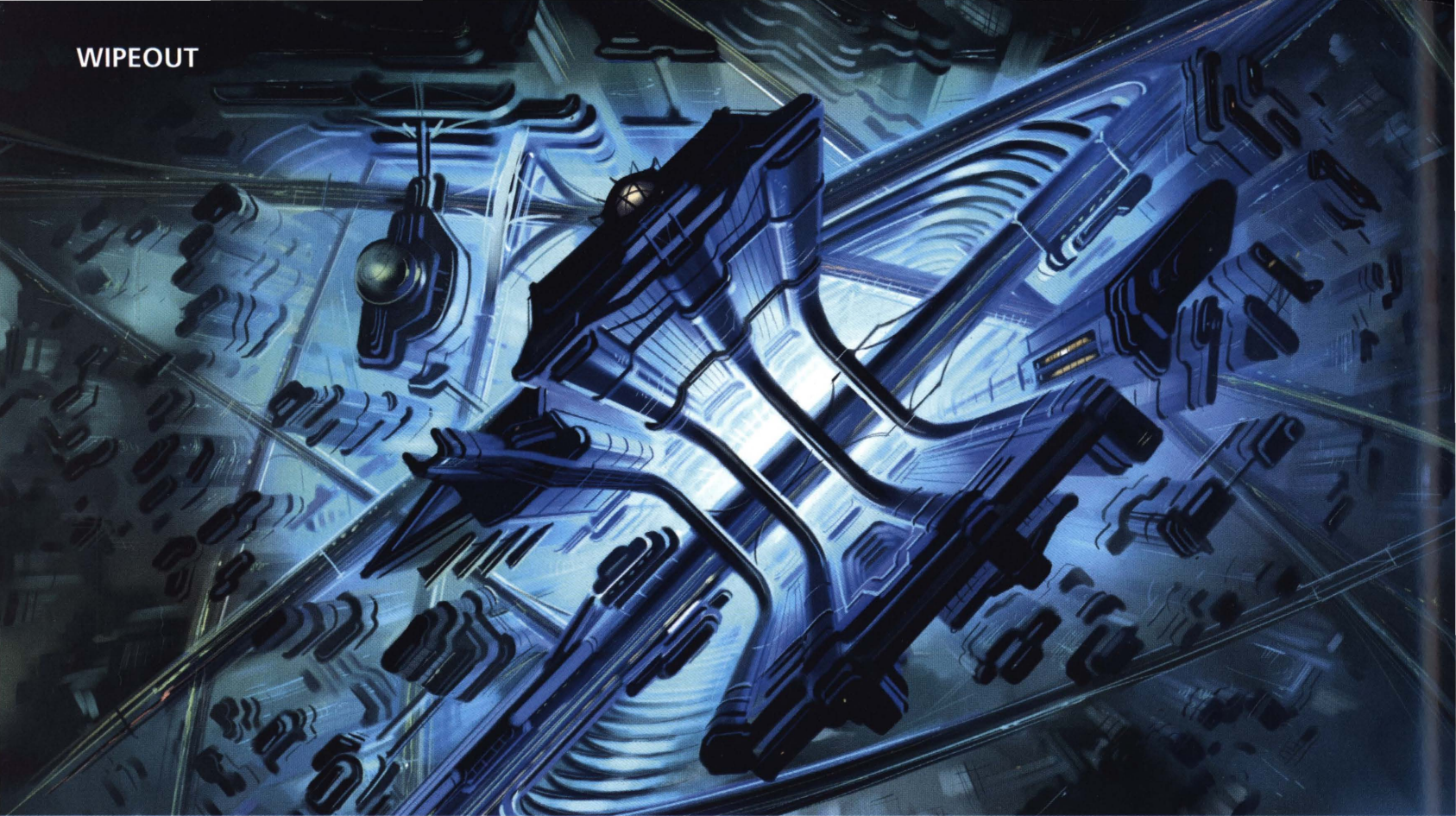
Colin Fawcett, lead artist



PUBLISHER: **SCEE** DEVELOPER: **IN-HOUSE (STUDIO LIVERPOOL)** RELEASE: **VARIOUS** FORMAT: **VARIOUS**

WIPEOUT (SERIES)





The 'rules' of the Wipeout universe

"*Wipeout* is a particularly art-heavy project, so we do give the artists more creative freedom than they may have on other more 'real-world' projects. However, the artists working on the titles have a good grounding in the *Wipeout* look and can instinctively tell if something doesn't quite fit. There are a couple of 'rules' that we encourage the artists to keep in mind, though.

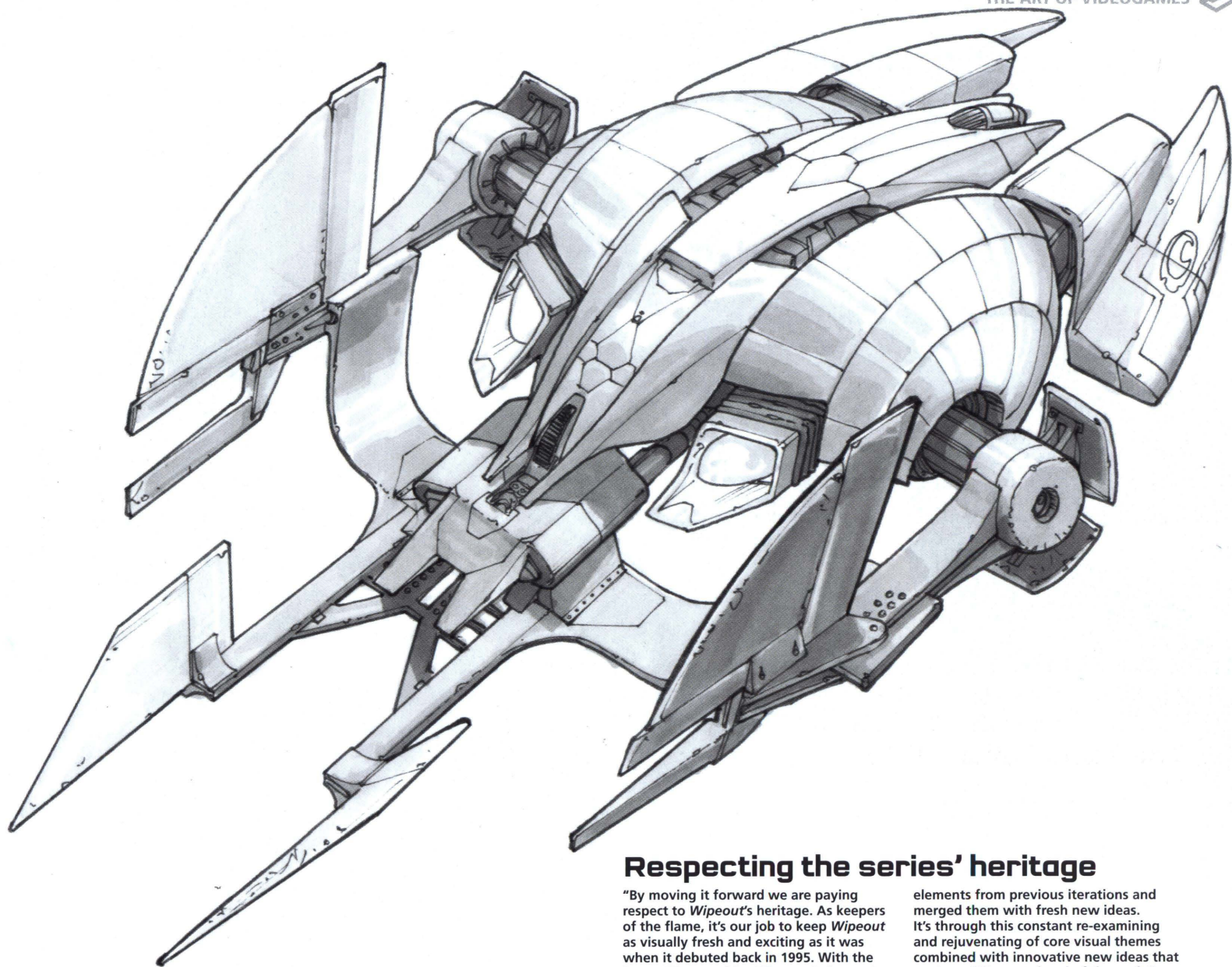
The first is clarity of shape. Since the player is moving through the environments at breakneck speed, it's

important that the environment doesn't become too cryptic or confusing.

The second is to reinforce the sensation of movement through the environment. This can be achieved by using repetition of shapes to build up a rhythm of objects passing by the player, or by using shapes that alter their silhouette as you pass through them. These principles serve as the backbone supporting whatever more experimental work an artist might try."

Colin Fawcett



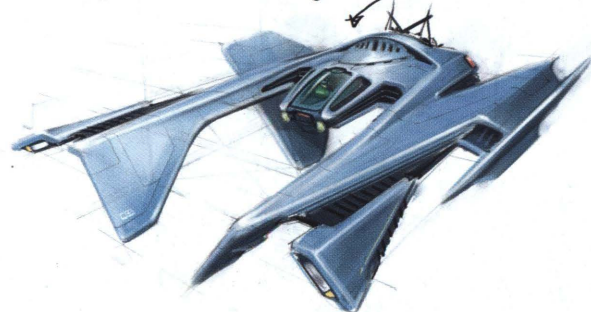
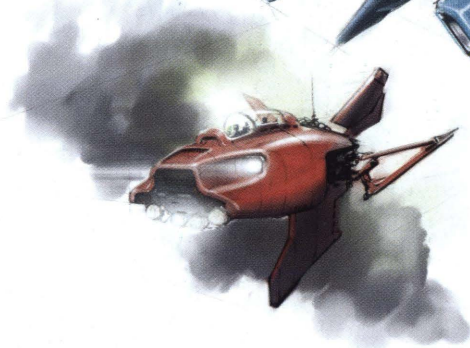
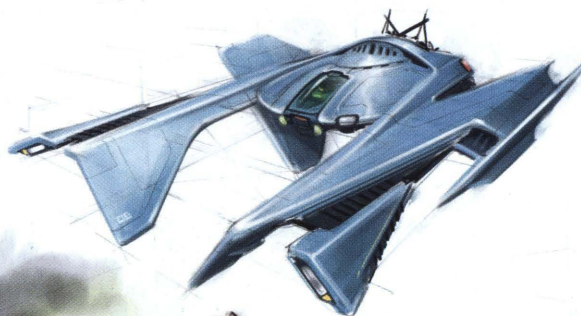
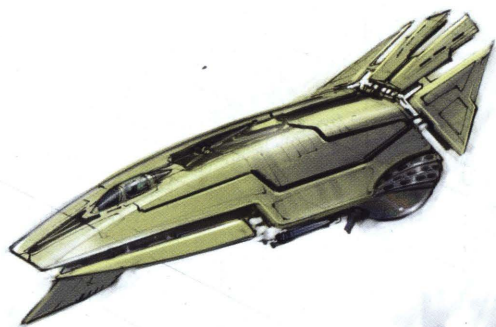


Respecting the series' heritage

"By moving it forward we are paying respect to *Wipeout's* heritage. As keepers of the flame, it's our job to keep *Wipeout* as visually fresh and exciting as it was when it debuted back in 1995. With the latest *Wipeout* title, *Wipeout Pulse*, we've refined and evolved existing visual

elements from previous iterations and merged them with fresh new ideas. It's through this constant re-examining and rejuvenating of core visual themes combined with innovative new ideas that we keep *Wipeout* ahead of the pack."

Colin Fawcett



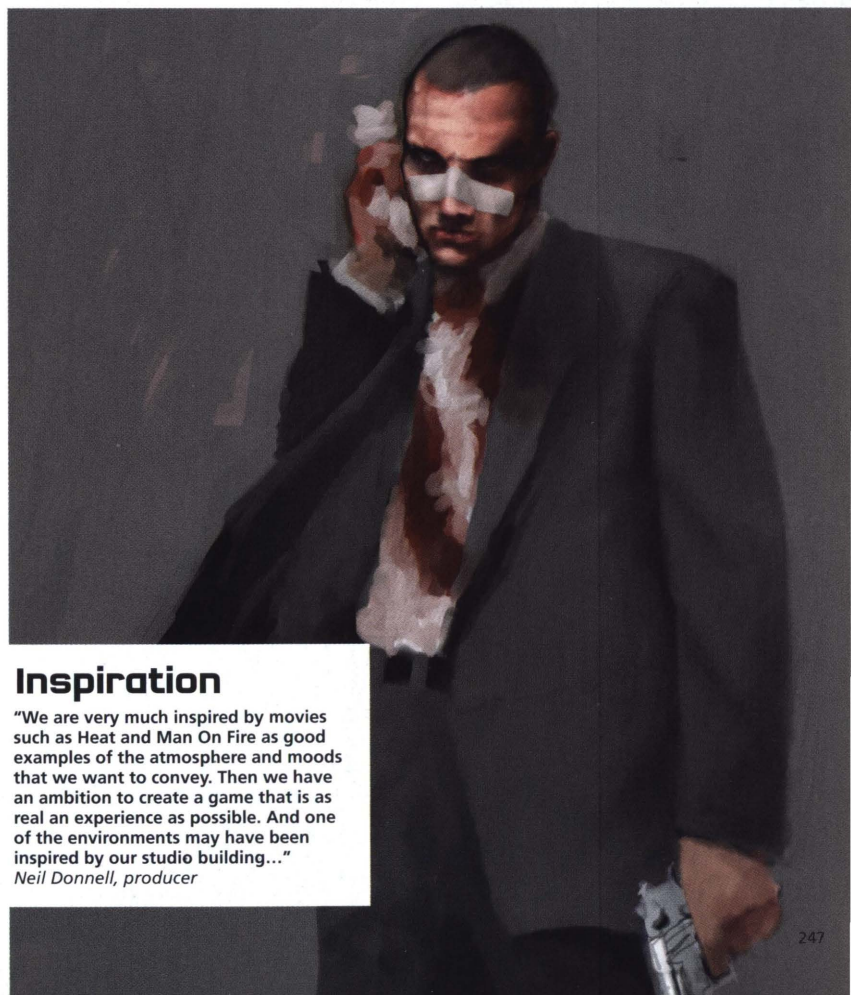
LESS 'RETRO' CONCEPT!





PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE RELEASE: 2007 FORMAT: 360, PC

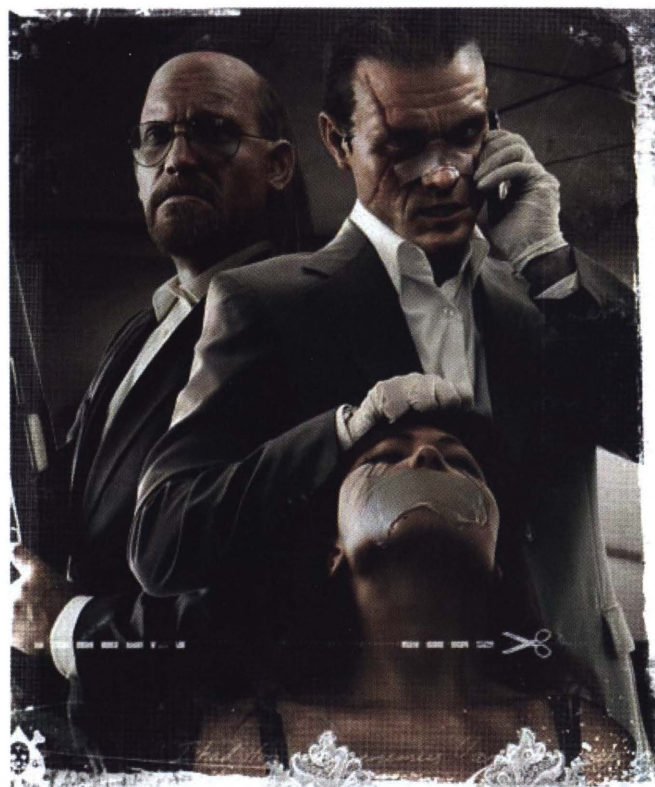
KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN



Inspiration

"We are very much inspired by movies such as *Heat* and *Man On Fire* as good examples of the atmosphere and moods that we want to convey. Then we have an ambition to create a game that is as real an experience as possible. And one of the environments may have been inspired by our studio building..."

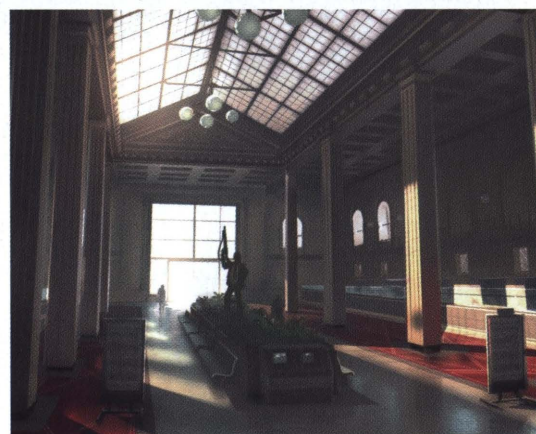
Neil Donnell, producer

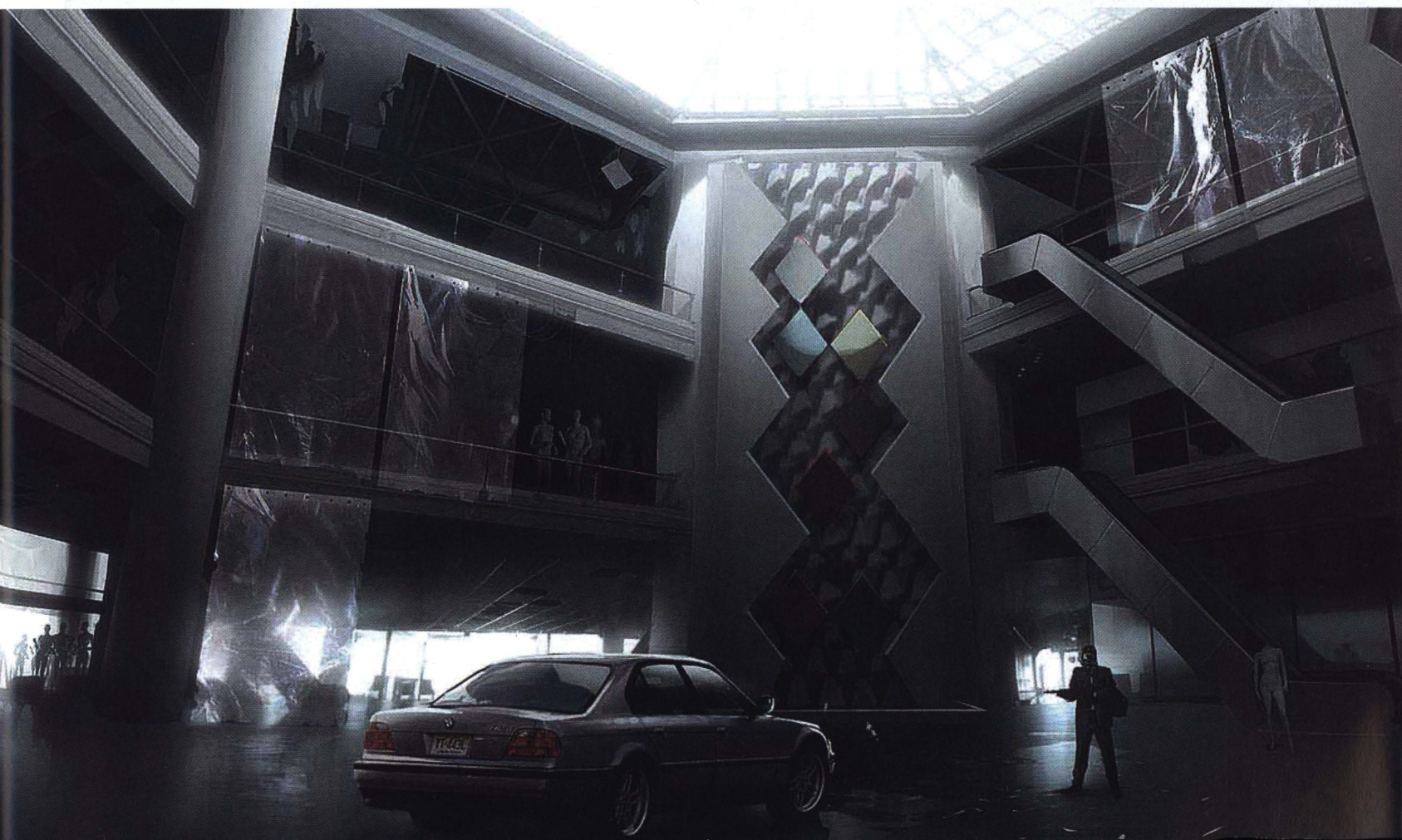


Characters and realism

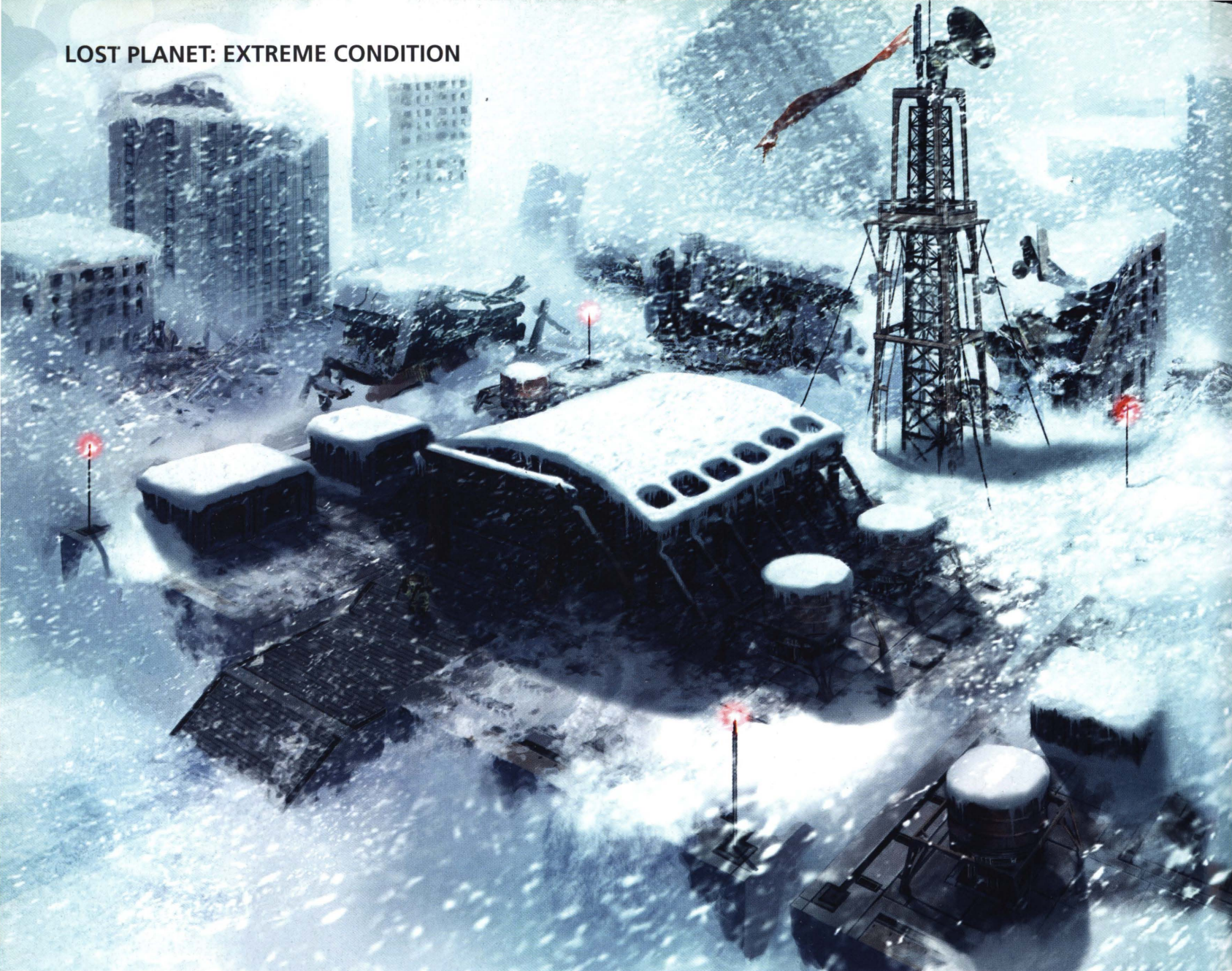
"We're all fans of realism here and we want *Kane & Lynch* to be as realistic as possible, in the look of the characters and environments as well as in the story and emotion of the game. Achieving characters that look and feel realistic helps the player form an interest and an emotional attachment to them, even if they don't seem that loveable on the surface."

Neil Donnell





LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

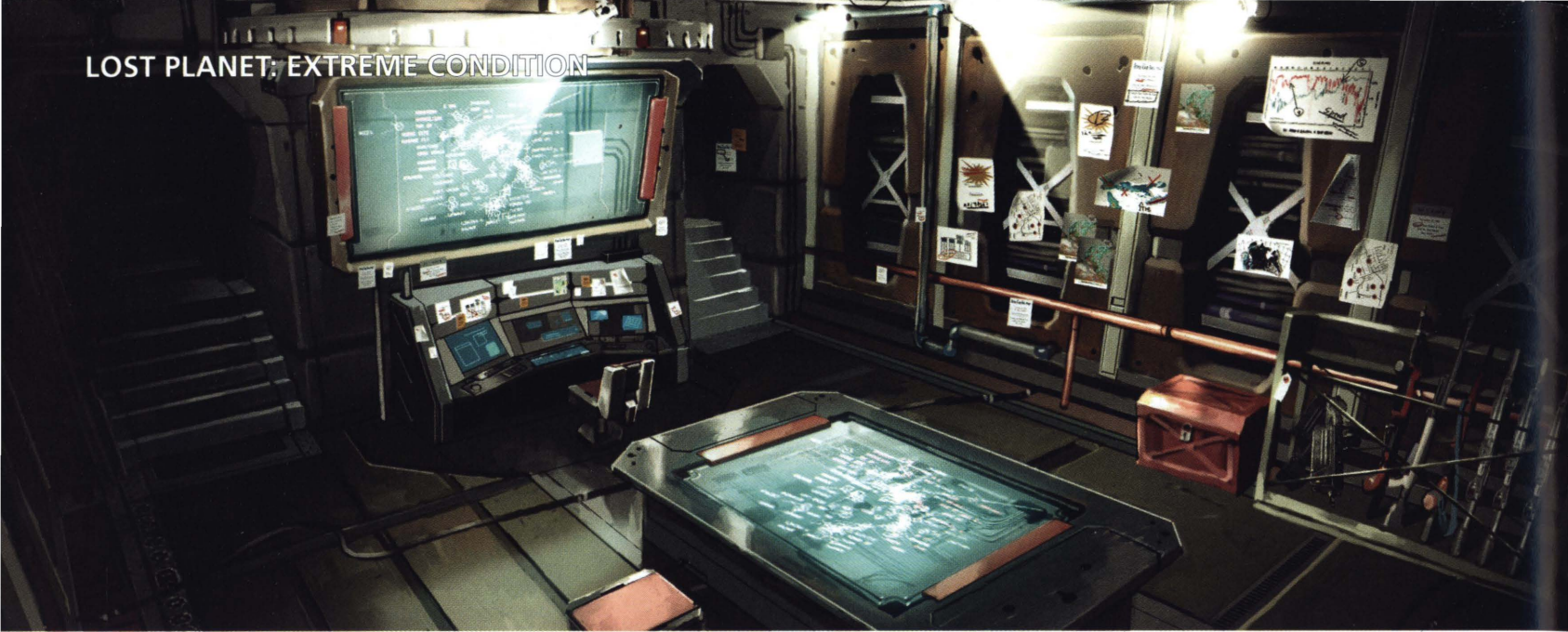


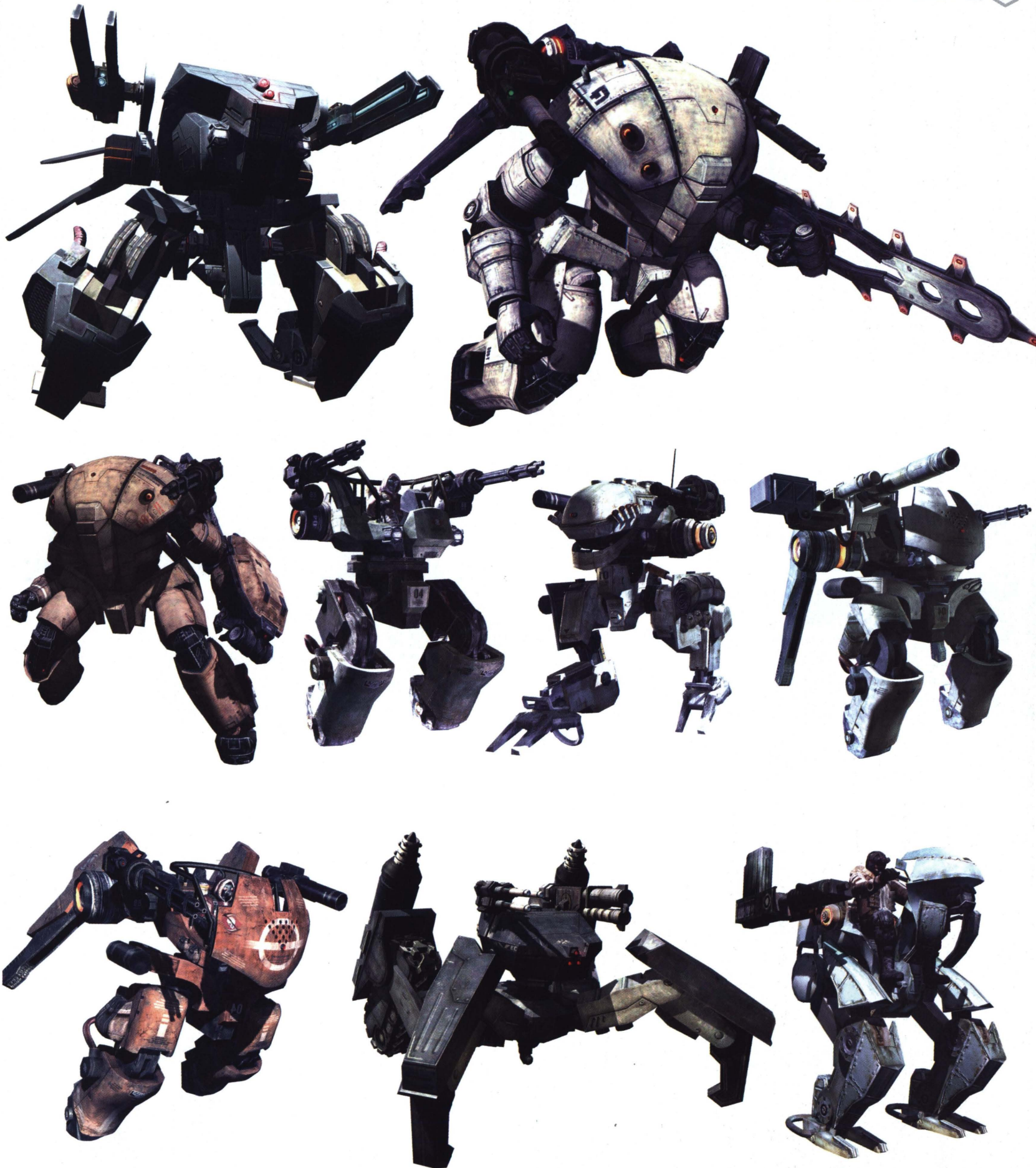


PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: 360

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION







BLACK





PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE (CRITERION) RELEASE: 2006 FORMAT: PS2, XBOX

BLACK

Inspiration

"Black was inspired by a love of action movies. We were always more interested in recreating the experience of a Hollywood firefight than the actual reality. There were plenty of developers out there making simulations, but we didn't think that anyone had actually made a great Hollywood-style shooter. We wanted our bullets to tear the environment apart, filling the air with debris and clouds of dust that would engulf the enemy and turn them into silhouettes; we called this effect 'thick air'.

Undeniably, the guns were the true stars of the show. But like the firefights we weren't concerned with the actual reality of firing the guns. Instead we focused on an enhanced experience that made the player feel like a true gun expert, and while still believable, was at its heart pure Hollywood. The guns were our lead characters so we gave them the same texture and polygon allocation that most thirdperson games would spend on their lead character. We wanted each gun to have its own history – we used scratches and patches of wear on the guns to tell us something about their age and previous owners, and make the guns feel more real."

'The Black team'



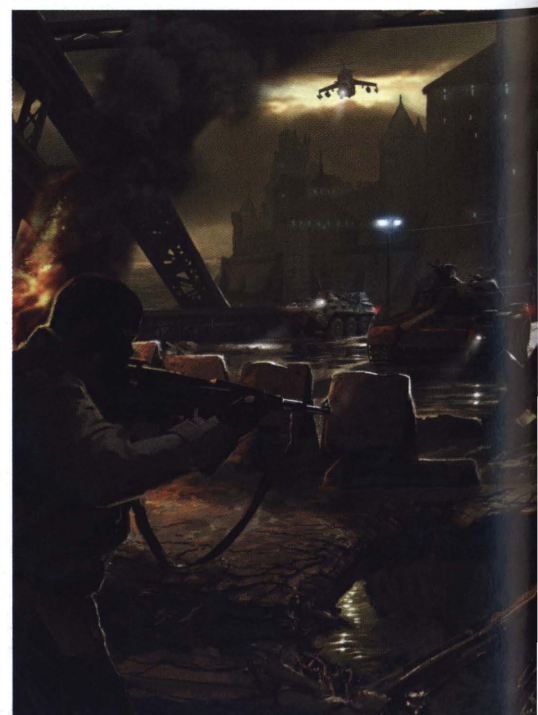


A limited palette

"*Black's* story unfolds in a fictional former Eastern Bloc country torn apart by years of war. We wanted the environments to look like they were stuck in the late '70s or early '80s, as if time had stopped when the conflict had begun. Everything had to look like it had been touched by war and was in the process of falling apart. To create these environments our artists used a palette of muted colours; steering clear of any highly saturated colours

helped to tie the environments together, and give the impression that everything was covered in a layer of masonry dust and dirt. Once the environments were finished we then applied a full-screen tint to push the entire colour palette toward a particular colour to mimic changes in light quality – blue for night, cyan for early morning or dusk, and a golden tint for daylight."

'The Black team'





Art and technology

"We wanted the world of *Black* to be as interactive as possible: if the player shot something there should be a reaction – glass should smash and objects erode, injuring the player and enemies. Because the

environment also supported gameplay the artists and designers had to work much closer than they had on previous projects and very often the line between the two disciplines became blurred." *'The Black team'*

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